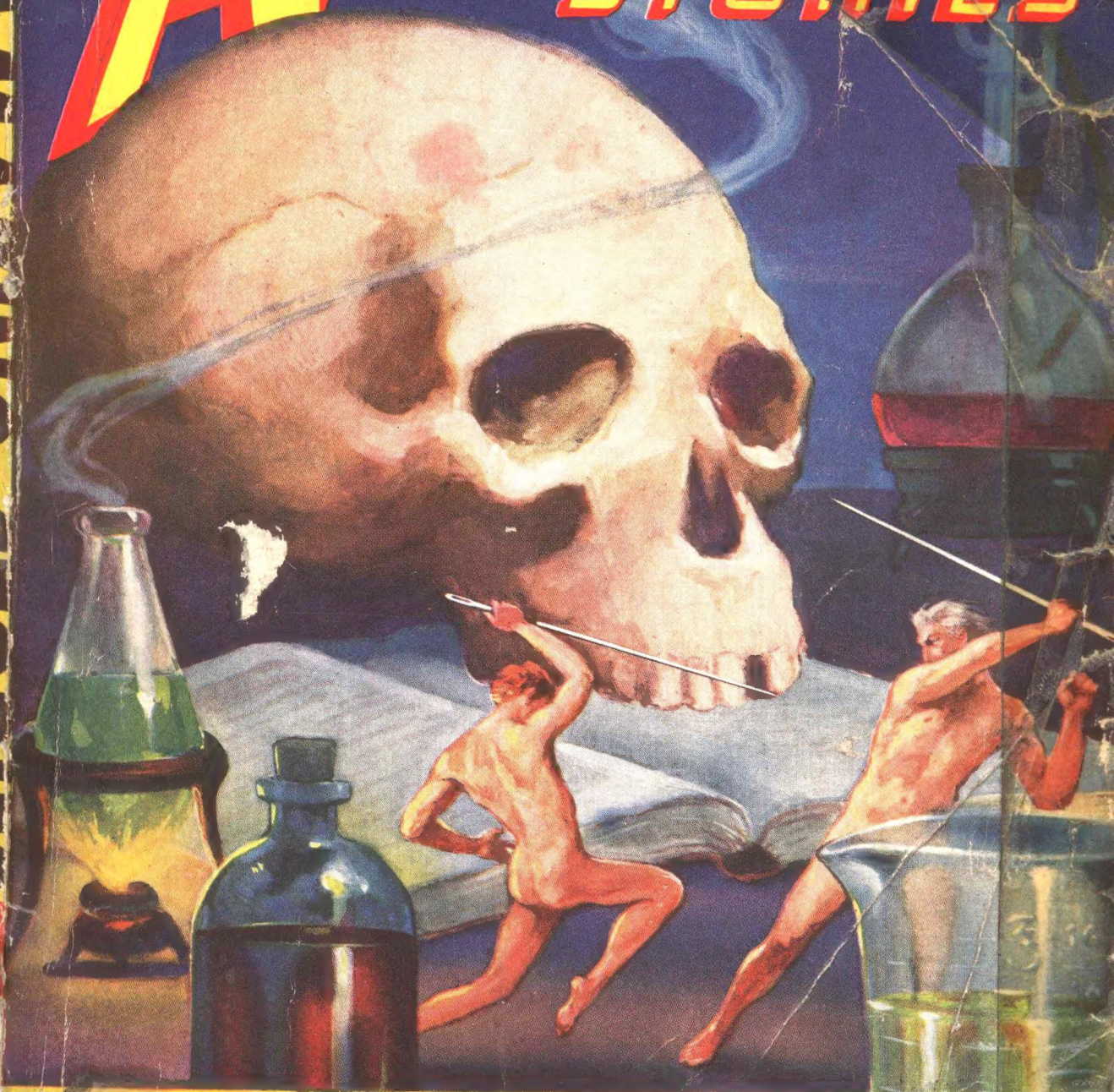
BATTLE BEFORE DAWN By Robert M. Williams

See BACK COVER

AMAZING STORIES

MARCH 25c



IT'S A SMALL WORLD By ROBERT BLOCH

VOLUME 18 NUMBER 3

AMAZING STORIES

MARCH 1944

Behold! he sees what no human eye has glimpsed since the beginning of time

He might have stepped from the frame of a Rembrandt painting, this bewigged figure of a man so patiently making lenses and squinting through them.

Night after night, like a child with a new toy, Antony van Leeuwenhoek, seventeenth century Dutch shopkeeper, hurried home to place anything and everything under his microscope: the brain of a fly, rain water, a hair, pepper, a cow's eye, scrapings from his teeth.

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MARCH 1944

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Front cover painting by J. Allen St. John illustrating a scene from "It's A Small World"
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Volume 18 Number 2

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The OBSERVATORY by THE Editor

ON page 12 of this issue you will find the results of our amazingly popular Hitler Illustration Contest conducted in the November, 1943 issue. And on page 14, you will find the winning story. We are proud to announce the name of the winner, Captain Meyer Friedenson, of the Medical Corps of the United States Army. For writing the best short-short story of approximately 1000 words, Captain Friedenson has won the *double* award of a $2000 war bond. Our congratulations to him—he had staggering competition!

YOUR editors were a little bit dazed when faced with the prospect of reading so many stories, but as we read on, our interest in the responses to our contest, and in the people who competed for the big prize, grew so intense that we lost all perspective of the job as a task, but rather, saw it as a privilege!

TO our utter amazement more than half the contestants were women! All of which tends to prove that science fiction and fantasy is a field of literature that finds a ready market in the female of the species for one very definite reason —the girls have vivid imaginations, and a very excellently developed fantasy "sense."

WE received a great many entries from soldiers, sailors, marines, even the Seabees. Many of them came from officers. One came from a holder of the Purple Heart, out of the fighting now because of wounds. Another came from a vet in a 1918 war soldier's home. Some even came from children now acting as heads of families in the absence of a fighting daddy.

AS we read, we became conscious of a fact that seems to us to be of prime importance in judging the war and the peace to follow in relation to the opinion of the general public. We learned a great deal about what the American thinks of the war and the peace, and what must be done to bring the first to a conclusion and the latter to permanence. First of all, we found that Hitler is the most hated man in the world, if not in history; and we shudder to think of what his lot would be if these story writers could be judges of his fate! A hundred different tortures were devised, a hundred different ways to make him suffer in some small measure for the pain and sorrow he has caused.

AS for themes, there were five that predominated. 1. Hitler kidnaped by the Martians. 2. The devil coming to take Hitler to hell. 3. The laboratory monster created to be a secret weapon turning on its creator. 4. The god of war taking Hitler on a tour of time to view the failures of past war-makers. 5. Hitler as a reincarnation of previous war-makers, such as Ghengis Khan, Napoleon, Attila, etc. In spite of the terrific competition, many of the stories developed these themes amazingly in so far as orginality is concerned.

NEVER, in the more than eighteen years of AMAZING STORIES' existence has a contest proved so popular and been so well entered. Never has a contest developed the interest and spirit of competition that this one has. When we selected a "hitler" subject for our illustration, we hoped to make the contest a tough one. We did that, the readers said, but it didn't stop them. They wrote stories, and how! We must give our readers credit for ability—and for plenty of imagination, ingenuity, and constructiveness.

FOR those contestants who inquired, in spite of the rules published with the contest illustration, we are unable to enter into any correspondence regarding it; and also, no manuscripts will be returned. It may be that we will publish other stories from among these from time to time, and these will be paid for at our usual rates.

LAST week Nelson S. Bond dropped in on us for a visit with the Coffee Club. He revealed that he was in town to do a radio program over a national hookup. He has written and sold several fantasy novels to the slicks. When he had finished his recital, we were rather proud of the man who made Lancelot Biggs, Horsesense Hank, and others beloved characters in our pages. We remember his many novels in our pages. They

(Continued on page 8)

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are classics today. And one thing that cheers us is the fact that Bond prefers writing fantasy above all else, and he swears that he will continue to write it. So hold your thumbs, readers, for another of those grand novels!

DAVID WRIGHT O'BRIEN writes us the almost incredible news that a B-29 waist gunner (that's him!) has time to write fiction! And better still, he's written some! Well, Dave, get the manuscript to us—we've run out of your stuff!

ALSO, we bought a story from soldier Robert Moore Williams. It looks as though even in the press of warfare, our authors are still thinking, breathing, eating, sleeping fiction writing. Which means plenty to us!

BEFORE we forget it, we've got a few things to say about the stories in this issue—and maybe about the next. First, since this issue will appear very close to Christmas, it seems appropriate that it contains one of the best Christmas stories we have read in many a year. You'll understand why it's good when we tell you Robert Bloch wrote it. "It's A Small World" fascinated us tremendously in manuscript form—so much that we called in J. Allen St. John and handed it to him with the simple instructions: "Do us a bang-up cover on this yarn—it's a topnotch story, and we want the best art we can get." Therefore, the cover. And we humbly believe it is the finest St. John has painted for us. It has exactly the fantasy atmosphere that Bloch so cleverly instilled into the story itself. Our thanks and congratulations to both of them.

DELVING into our precious store, we came up with a Robert Moore Williams story called "Battle Before Dawn," attached to a Virgil Finlay illustration. It was thus recalled to mind that Williams wrote the story around the illustration, and we want to chalk up another example of really fine collaboration between artist and author. You'll get the same queazey chills up and down your back that we got when we read the manuscript.

UP-and-coming Comet Yerxa sizzles in this issue with "Crossed Wires," one of the most fascinating science tales we've yet read. The idea in this one is terrific, and the punch it carries is held up right through to the final paragraph. It was a manuscript that tickled us tremendously to get. New ideas are rare, and this one's a peach. Orchids to a fine contribution to science fiction for 1944!

OF course you all remember Sgt. Mort Weisinger! Yessir, here's another soldier with a story for you. This one's a time travel story (always popular) and it's called "Thompson's Time Traveling Theory"—a mighty clever little yarn, you'll admit, and defying that oldest of old taboos "you can't kill your grandfather in a time trip because then you yourself won't be born—and if you're not born, you can't go back into time to kill him, so . . ." oh heck, you figure it out for yourself!

"MAGNETIC Miss Meteor" (another Finlay!) is the latest contribution of Don Wilcox. We won't make any further comment, because it is obviously unnecessary. We think you'll like it.

BERKELEY LIVINGSTON returns with "Cokie Goes Treasure Hunting" containing those characters he's beginning to make famous. As a matter of fact, Berkeley knows whereof he speaks when he describes the people in his stories—he's been amongst 'em for a good many years, observing and making notes, and learning to know them as only their friends can. And it seems there's a lot of fantasy in the world "beneath the L tracks!"

"SPAWN OF JUPITER" is the kind of a story you'd expect to get from good old Ed Earl Repp. This one's full of all the old hell and high water that has thrilled his fans for fifteen years.

SOME time ago we ran a story by Helmar Lewis which got almost as much fan mail as the author himself expected from it—and that was a lot. Then we ran one that got panned. So Helmar stepped up with a challenge, and dumped "Journey In Time To Cleopatra" into our laps—which is the wackiest time travel yarn we've seen. How about writing Helmar some more letters? We don't mind if you pan him a bit—he did a lot to destroy our romantic notions about Cleo, and we gotta have some revenge!

CROWDED out of this issue was G. H. Irwin's "Planet Of Dead Cities." The reason was his own insistence that we return the manuscript for revision because he thought it wasn't good enough! Well, if it's much better, we won't believe it! And we promise, we'll run it the instant we get it back!

RECENTLY, you may have noticed, we have expanded the Discussions columns. This was in the nature of an experiment decided upon because of many letters written to us by readers who felt we were not giving them sufficient room for expression, and also were being too harsh in

(Concluded on page 10)

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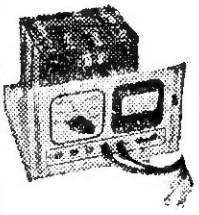

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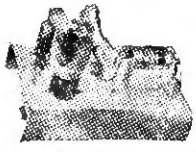

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(Concluded from page 8)

the matter of "boiling down" their letters. We still cut letters, to conserve paper, and to give more of you a chance to have your say—but we have been amazed and delighted by the response our new policy in regard to readers' letters has brought. Originally our own editorial column got most of the plaudits for departments, but we've been shoved back into limbo now. Yessir, it's been a case of "get in, fellas, the water's swell!" This month's Discussions will give you some idea of how much interest has been stirred up.

AS we were writing this, Mr. Bloch, father of the author, called us on the phone, since he was visiting in Chicago. Mr. Bloch is confined to a wheel-chair, but it has certainly been no deterrent to his enthusiasm concerning both his son's activities and science fiction. We want to pay our respects to a grand old man, and thank him for the many kind things he said about us and our magazine. It is things like these that make us proud to be an editor.

THE *piece-de-resistance* of the next issue (May) will be David V. Reed's great new novel (50,000 words) called "Murder In Space" which we believe is the scientific detective story which will have you stamping and screaming in the aisles for more! If you liked "Empire of Jegga" (wow, did you!) you'll go for this in strictly a big way. Roses to a great writer for a great story.

IF we seem to be especially enthusiastic and addicted to adjectives this issue, it is as it seems. Doggone it, we're still the kind of fan ourselves who thrills over swell science fiction stories, and recently they have been coming over our desk in delightfully satisfying numbers. Can you imagine a job as soft as ours? Sitting here reading hundreds of swell stories, and playing God in selecting the ones you'll read? We humbly hope we're doing a good job of it. We don't believe anything that has a sock to it is being turned down, paper shortage or no paper shortage! After all, the war'll end sometime, and then you'll get the works!

THIS March issue (since there will be no April issue) is really our eighteenth anniversary! We're launching out on our nineteenth year of publication with the next issue—which makes David V. Reed's new novel a sort of celebration novel.

IT doesn't seem nineteen years since we picked up the first issue of AMAZING STORIES from a newsstand in Milwaukee. We still remember the thrill we got to discover there was such a magazine, and we are still as thrilled as each new issue hits our desk. We've lived it, eaten with it, slept with it for nineteen years, and by golly, we're proud of it. Science fiction has come a long way in those years.

AN amazing thing about this war business is the fact that we have produced prodigiously, doubled our navy in one year, are building 100,000 planes (and more) yearly, are providing our allies with material assistance in mammoth quantities, with a net result that our national debt will mount to 300 billions. All this is achieved quite simply in a manner of speaking—we just do it. The debt doesn't bother anyone. It becomes a figure, like the distance to Mars or to the nearest star. Something we just don't comprehend. But the main point is that the debt doesn't *hinder* us from doing and producing what is needed. And whatever else we need will be produced. If the war lasts ten years, production of war materiel will go right on, and presumably, the debt will go right on merrily skyrocketing to the distance to the farthest star. Then, after peace, and forecast direly right now, comes inflation, national ruination because of the debt, the impossibility of providing even one tenth of the material of peace (iceboxes, homes, radios, cars) to cover every human want. Why is it we can't build things to use peacefully without a lot of yelling about ruination, and we *can* build tanks, planes, battleships and a million other things to fight with and nobody wails impossible at all? To whom do we owe this national debt? And why not owe it during peacetime and have none of this slums argument, no lack of the ordinary facilities of civilized life (which are necessities, and not luxuries—no implement useful in the business of living is a luxury), no denial of happiness because of lack of materiel? While we are fighting for a better world, let's do a little planning on a way to *get* it after we've *fought* for it! If the impossible is possible during wartime, it is a *cinch* during peacetime.

ALL of which, you may say, has nothing to do with science fiction—but it has! AMAZING STORIES has, inherent in its nature, the power of prophecy. Writers dream of the future, producing its image in fiction. They forecast things to come, and so amazingly accurately! We can number a thousand realities of today which were once only fiction in our pages. Perhaps a classic is the giant land battleship, the tank with which Hitler crushed the low countries—and the Panzer type of warfare. And AMAZING STORIES has presented many stories on the final achievement of what we have just said. We fully expect that to come true too! Don't you think so? *Rap*

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Contest Illustration

AMAZING STORIES is pleased to announce the winner of the Hitler Illustration Contest presented in the November, 1943, issue.

Given the illustration reproduced here, contestants were to write a short-story of approximately 1,000 words about it. It was to be a story of Hitler seated in a plane or spaceship beside an unhuman-looking being.

As a grand prize for the best story written around this illustration, AMAZING STORIES offered $1,000 in maturity value war bonds, with the stipulation that the prize would be doubled if the winner was a member of any branch of the armed forces. The final tabulation of the contest by the judges revealed the winner to be a captain in the medical corps of the United States Army! Therefore, AMAZING STORIES is proud to present a $2,000 war bond and extend its hearty congratulations to:

CAPTAIN MEYER FRIEDENSON, M.C., U.S.A.

(HOME ADDRESS) 711 WALTON AVENUE

BRONX, NEW YORK

A United States series E War Bond for $2,000 (maturity value) has been sent to Captain Friedenson.

The winning story was selected from among ten finalists. Honorable mention goes to the following nine contestants (listed alphabetically, not in the order of excellence).

ARTHUR BERKOWITZ,	Rt. 1, Box 534-D, La Canada, California.
EANDO BINDER,	136 Tenafly Road, Englewood, New Jersey.
MRS. IONE BLOODSWORTH,	9766 Rosensteel Ave., Forest Glen, R. F. D., Silver Spring, Md.
CPL. WILLIAM J. EVANS,	Det. Med. Dept., U. S. Army.
MISS NELL G. FAHRION,	747 Pennsylvania Street, Denver 3, Colorado.
1ST. LT. MARTIN E. KOSKELA,	Coast Artillery Corps, U. S. Army.
CLAYRE STRZELECKI LIPMAN,	228 Sausalito Blvd., Sausalito, California.
MICHEL LIPMAN,	220 Sausalito Blvd., Sausalito, California.
JOHN FIELD MULHOLLAND,	Round Lake, Minnesota.

CONTEST WINNER

I WAS born in Polotsk, Russia, scene of much current war activity, on May 15, 1905, and was brought to this country at the age of 18 months.

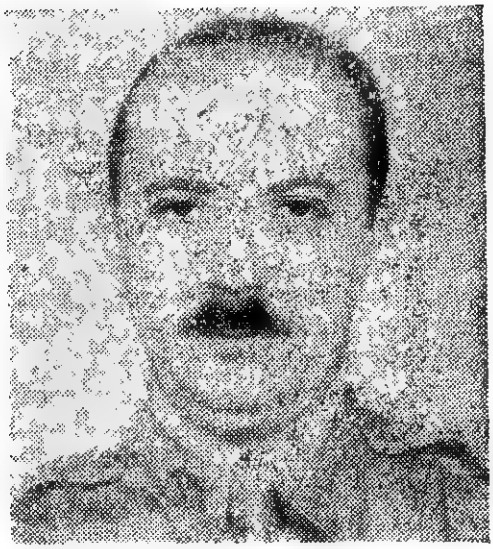
I lived in New York City until the age of 14, attending the public schools there. My family then moved to Connecticut, first to Ansonia and then to New Haven.

I entered Yale University in 1920 at the age of 15 and received my B. S. degree in 1924, and my M. D. in 1927.

I interned a year in Wilmington, Delaware, and another year in New York City, and commenced practice in 1929 in New York, which has been my home ever since.

I am a member of numerous medical societies, am certified as a specialist in internal medicine and cardiology. I have had several hospital appointments and am cardiologist for the New York City Health Department.

I have published numerous medical articles in a number of scientific journals, but have hitherto never submitted any item of fiction.



Captain Meyer Friedenson, M.C., U.S.A.

I have been married for 15 years, have a daughter aged 13, who has literary ambitions, and a son aged 8, who aspires to the practice of medicine.

I have been reading your magazine intermittently for the past 15 years.—*M. Friedenson, Capt. M. C.*

CAPTAIN FRIEDENSON'S prize-winning story is presented on the following pages (folios 14 and 15) almost exactly as he wrote it, with the exception of minor editing such as all manuscripts receive before publication. The editors express the opinion that Captain Friedenson, whose experience along fiction lines, he reveals, has been initiated by this first story, did a mighty swell job of explaining the story significance behind our contest illustration. His story answered several basic demands which all good fiction must have, and at the same time, made several unique emotional appeals which apply directly to the modern world situation. His story is truly escapist material, both in the imaginative sense, and in the emotional sense. Perhaps no more delicate and complete punishment could be devised for the man the whole world hates! Turn the page and read. . . .

THE SUPERMAN

By CAPTAIN MEYER FRIEDENSON

(Winner in Amazing Stories' Hitler Illustration Contest. See page 12.)

"WELL, Mephitis—or Adolf Hitler, to keep the record straight—you've failed again! Back to Mars you go . . ."

"Wait! Wait! Please! Give me just a little more time! After all, it isn't over yet. I have had only a temporary setback. I'll get started again and then I'll certainly make it. Please give me only one more chance."

"No, we can't do it! We've given you 1,500 years already. Isn't that enough? You've delayed our plans by centuries. All the other planets of the solar system have been overcome and are completely under our control. Your mission was to subjugate Earth, the only unconquered planet, and you didn't do it.

"When you were defeated as Attila at Chalons in 451, all we got was excuses. 'You were betrayed—the weather had unexpectedly turned against you—you didn't have adequate weapons!' You said, 'Just wait until next time!'

"So we waited 750 years until Genghis Khan—and what happened? Again failure! True, you conquered China, then most of Asia, swept westward to the Danube. You were ruthless, merciless. Remember your pyramid of skulls? But finally you weakened and once more you failed! And again what did we get? Excuses—just excuses!

"We gave you another 600 years and Napoleon. In him you fought and killed and conquered your way all across Europe, but you just didn't have it in you. Remember the retreat from Moscow? Then 1815 and Waterloo?

"Our patience had by that time become exhausted! But you begged and whined and pleaded until, in spite of our better judgment, we consented to give you another century or so.

"But now you've had your final chance, Mephitis, my friend! You made a good beginning in rearming the Rhineland and taking Czechoslovakia. You seemed at your best in Poland, Luxembourg, Holland, Belgium, Denmark and Norway (bettering that Earth upstart, Hohenzollern). When your planes attacked England, we thought that you were finally on the road to success. You did have the English on their knees, but you didn't finish them. Then again you misjudged the Russians! For the final time, Mephitis, you've failed. You must be liquidated. We've no use for failures."

"But it isn't over yet! They double-crossed me, those damned Russians! In spite of our mutual non-aggression pact, they stealthily built up their army, their air force, their factories. How could I have known that they would be such liars and such sneaks? They pretended to be weak!

"I'll beat them yet! Just give me a chance! Even now our armies in Russia are proceeding westward according to plan. We'll entice them all the way to Germany and then you'll see! I am still strong. I have most of Europe under my thumb. Think of my army and my air force! The Japanese will help us. They promised they would! Then we'll get them too. Please give me just a little more time!"

"No, Mephitis Hitler, this time you are coming back to stand trial for your failures!"

The spaceship sped smoothly and rapidly through the void for several days. Landing at a spaceport on the outskirts of an enormous city, Hitler and his captor took a rapid ground vehicle to a tall, gloomy structure at its center. They entered, proceeded down a long corridor to an elevator which took them down far below the surface. Stepping from the elevator, they walked toward a large chamber marked "Court of General Failures." They entered.

Court was in session. Three red-robed judges officiated from an elevated platform at one end of the dank, bare room which was entirely devoid of furniture, without even so much as a chair for the defendant. There was no audience.

The prisoner stood facing the court. Two of the judges appeared extremely bored: one yawned continuously—the other was frankly asleep.

An attendant handed a thick file labeled "Mars versus Mephitis" to the third judge who barely glanced at it.

"You are accused of failure to carry out your mission to conquer Earth, and thus of hampering our plans to subjugate the entire solar system. We won't waste too much time on the trial because the facts in this case speak for themselves. So we'll dispense with prosecution witnesses.

"There will be no need for a defense counsel because this court is absolutely honest and unprejudiced. It will impartially consider the interests of both sides.

"Prisoner at the bar, have you brought any witnesses to testify in your defense?"

"No, your Honor. I was brought here so unexpectedly that—"

"Well, we'll do without them. You won't need witnesses anyhow. Do you deny the truth of these charges?"

"Well, you see—"

"This court, after earnest and careful consideration of all the evidence and all the circumstances finds you guilty as charged. Have you anything to say before sentence is passed?"

"Please—"

"That will be all. We have given you too much time already. Years* are passing." He turned to his colleagues, both of whom were restlessly glancing at their watches. "Are we agreed?"

"Yes, yes," said the two in unison. "Let's get it over with. Whatever you say . . ."

"Then it is the sentence of this court that you be banished from Mars and from Earth for eternity. You will spend your days in solitude on a barren asteroid one mile in diameter. You will be forced to listen continuously to scratchy recordings of all your speeches on Earth.

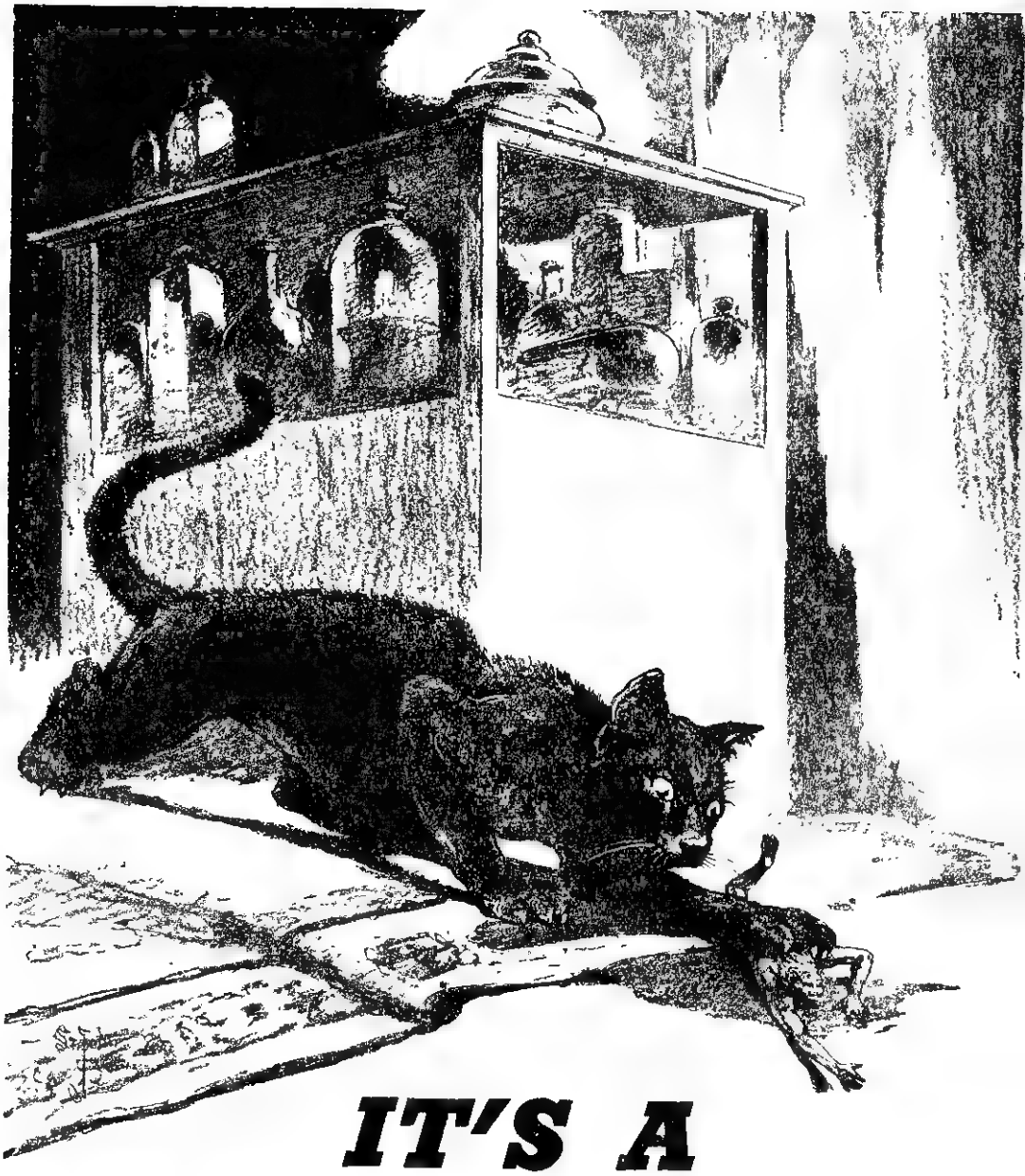
"To show you that this court is not entirely without mercy, it will grant you a respite of one day for any year during which a single kind word has been said of you anywhere either on Mars or on Earth.* On such a day you may have the blessing of complete silence. The burden, both to find the evidence of the kind word and to prove it to this court, will, however, fall on you. Since you will be unable to leave the asteroid, either to hear what is being said on Earth or Mars, or to inform the court of it; and since no one will be able to communicate with you, we can't see how this will help you very much. That will, however, be your problem.

"TAKE HIM AWAY!"

THE END

* Obviously time on Mars is a different factor than on Earth. Several years passed during the trial, therefore a minute on Mars may be a month on Earth (in comparison) and so on.—Ed.

* When the time difference between the two worlds is taken into consideration, this is irony indeed!—Ed.



IT'S A SMALL WORLD

By **ROBERT BLOCH**

For two tiny, bewildered people, it was a struggle for survival in a world of toys

IT WAS Christmas Eve. Family men in their cozy bungalows hummed cheerfully as they put the finishing touches on Christmas trees. Men of affairs slapped each other affably on the back and toasted the season in the lounges of exclusive clubs. Merry-makers crowded the public streets and filled the taverns to overflowing. Children caroled gayly in church services. Mothers smiled their secret smiles as they wrapped presents.

And Clyde Hilton worked like a lousy dog in Propper's toyshop.

The funny part of it was, Clyde didn't care. He was as happy as the rest. Twelve hours on his feet today—facing mobs of customers gone frantic with the necessity of making last-minute purchases—that was Clyde's lot, but he was still smiling.

From time to time the redheaded young man grinned and patted the left-hand pocket of his suitcoat. Deep down inside reposed a little plush-covered box. The box contained an engagement ring.

Clyde fingered it and grinned—grinned at the girl behind the counter across the aisle.

Gwen Thomas was worth grinning at. A pert, trim, dark-haired girl with milk-white skin and perfectly modeled features—she had the delicacy of a china doll. "Exquisite" is a somewhat precious word, and yet it exactly described Gwen's miniature-like beauty.

Clyde waited for the moment that he would slip the ring on her dainty finger. This would be a Christmas they'd both remember. To top it off, Old Man Propper had promised Clyde a raise. He'd winked indulgently at this romance between his two clerks, and the holiday spirit had him in its grip. They'd have a little party after closing-time, and then Clyde would give Gwen the ring and Old Man Propper would say, "Bless you, my children." Just a slice out of Dickens.

Meanwhile, Clyde scribbled furiously in his order book, wrestled with the wrappings of a hundred packages, tangled himself in yards of twine and ribbon, punched the cash-register until his fingers were blistered, and kept up a running fire of sales chatter.

He had just sold a toy train to the fat lady and her husband when he saw the man.

It had been a job, selling this expensive model, but Clyde was something of an expert in the train field and he rejoiced in the opportunity of turning on high-pressure tactics. So he was quite elated, and finished his wrapping with deft fingers.

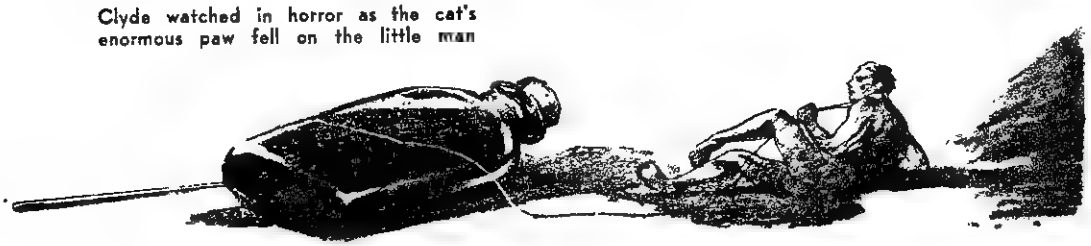
But he almost dropped the twine when the man came in.

The door opened. The toyshop was crowded, and ordinarily an entering customer couldn't be detected in the throng—but this man was plainly visible.

Clyde stared.

The man wore a black overcoat with a turned-up collar that reached his chin. He was hatless, and his wiry gray hair stood up in a bushy mop upon his skull.

Clyde watched in horror as the cat's enormous paw fell on the little man



The man had a great beaked nose, and a curiously red mouth. Despite gray hair, his face was absolutely unlined. Not a wrinkle disturbed the pristine pallor of his long face. It was a perfectly blank background for the blazing intensity of his eyes.

If his hair denoted age and his unlined face indicated youth, then his eyes were—eternal.

They were black, but shining—shining radiantly with a penetrating fire. Two fountains of strength. Clyde saw the eyes before he saw anything else, and the rest of his scrutiny was just incidental. He gaped, fascinated. For some reason a strange fancy occurred to him. During his lifetime, he mused, he must have seen a million pairs of eyes —but never until now had he realized what *power* the eye could contain. Black, blazing fountains.

There was one other slight excuse for Clyde's interest in the stranger.

The man was seven feet tall.

He was not a giant, in the ordinary sense of the word—not one of those tall, thin glandular monstrosities. The man was adequately proportioned to his height. His shoulders spanned the doorway. The chest bulging under the overcoat was massive. Clyde saw the man reach up and adjust his collar—and his hand was the size of a dinner plate.

CLYDE watched the massive figure move through the milling crowd towards his counter. It was only as the gigantic bulk loomed directly before him that Clyde realized he was leading a small boy.

The child was an insignificant midge, contrasted to his huge companion. His tousled head scarcely reached the big man's knees, although he was large for a boy of seven.

Abruptly, Clyde tore his attention away from the ponderous stranger and concentrated on the boy. That was sensible sales psychology—experience had taught him that a clerk must study the child and try to anticipate his wants.

Clyde got another shock when he scrutinized the boy. Here, in miniature, was as strange a creature as the giant.

For one thing, the boy's clothing was adult. Not a smart boy's shop imitation of "grown-up" attire—but *adult*. His little topcoat was an authentic replica of his immense companion's garb. The boy's hands were buried deep in the pockets, and he walked with truly adult nonchalance. His carriage and demeanor were adult.

But the boy's face presented the strangest paradox.

Clyde couldn't remember seeing a child whose face didn't light up immediately upon entering the toyshop. Even the children of the rich would squeal and giggle, their eyes would roll, and they would gesture with frantic excitement.

This boy was different. His stare was cold, unemotional. His pale face was as unwrinkled as the curious face of the huge man beside him.

And—his eyes were the same! Deep, black, disturbing eyes; the eyes of an adult in the face of youth.

Now giant and infant faced the counter before Clyde. He quickly mastered his curiosity and assumed his professional poise.

"Good evening," said Clyde. "Can I help you?"

"I wonder," said the tall man. His voice had a curious depth; it rolled sonorously down upon Clyde's ears. Clyde stared up into the white face and the glittering eyes.

But the big man had turned to the child.

"What would you like, son?" he asked.

The child shrugged. It was a

strangely sophisticated shrug, a shrug of boredom.

"There is nothing here that interests me," he lisped in a childish treble.

CLYDE did his best to hide his strange irritation at the child's nonchalance. He smiled down.

"Isn't there anything you'd like Santa Claus to bring you?" he asked.

"Santa Claus?" said the boy. He gazed at Clyde. And then he laughed.

The laugh did something to Clyde. Perhaps he was tired. Perhaps he was overwrought. Perhaps his imagination was playing tricks.

But the laugh was adult. Sardonic. More than sardonic. It was—evil.

An evil, knowing chuckle from the lips of a child . . .

No. It couldn't be. Clyde knew he was weary, confused. He fought down the feeling of frustration.

"How about an electric train?" he coaxed.

"I've got one, thank you."

"A sled?"

"Hardly."

"We have some wonderful new chemistry sets——"

"I think not."

Curiously, the boy and the old man exchanged glances. The boy didn't laugh but his eyes twinkled mockingly.

Clyde stood there with obvious bafflement written on his face. The giant stranger seemed to sense it.

"Perhaps we'd better not detain this young man, Roger," he said. "We'll look around for ourselves, sir. We might find something we fancy."

"Very well."

Clyde moved down the counter.

The crowd had thinned out in one of those temporary lulls that inexplicably occur in any shop. Clyde saw that Gwen was unoccupied at the moment. He stepped around the side of the other counter and joined her. Her tiny hand found his under the concealing counter and they stood together, smiling.

Then Gwen gestured at the curious pair on the other side of the shop. Her eyes clouded, and she repressed a hasty gasp.

"There he is again!"

"Who?"

"The giant—the tall man."

"You've seen him before?"

"Yes. He came in several days ago, when you were out on a delivery."

"Who is he?"

"I don't know. I watched Mr. Propper wait on him. He said he didn't want anything—he was just looking around. And then he stared at me."

"Stared at you?"

"Yes. Did you notice his eyes? They're awful, Clyde. Like the eyes of a statue. His eyelids don't blink, did you notice?"

"Maybe he takes drugs," Clyde grinned. But he didn't feel any amusement. Gwen had noticed the eyes, too. . . .

"Oh! There it is again—that stare ——"

It was true.

Turning, Clyde saw that the tall man was peering across the room. His gaze fastened upon the girl at Clyde's side. Intense, penetrating, beating down like a palpable weight, his stare consumed the girl.

And the tiny eyes of the boy added to the barrage of scrutiny. The two of them were smiling—giant and dwarf, smiling alike, as they stared. And now, unobtrusively, the giant bent his massive head and listened as the boy whispered something to him. His stubby finger gestured their way. The man smiled, shook his gray mane.

"Clyde, I don't like that man," whispered the girl.

"Never mind, darling. He's just a screwball. I'll get rid of him now." Clyde patted Gwen's shoulder and stepped briskly around the counter. He marched over and confronted his unusual customers.

"Did you find anything?" he asked. It was hard to keep his voice from quivering, strangely difficult to keep his face from betraying the repulsion he felt.

THE tall man bent his great head and smiled benevolently at Clyde. That is, his *face* smiled. His eyes merely flamed.

"Not for Roger, here," he said. "But there's another little boy I'd like to select a gift for. I think I'll take that tricycle over there."

A finger the size of a wax taper stabbed suddenly in the direction of a tricycle.

"Yes," piped Roger. "We'll take that." The child's face was suddenly animated, purposeful.

"Good. That will be $10.95. Shall I wrap it up for delivery?"

"If you will please. I notice you have facilities for gift-wrapping in the back room. Would you mind——?"

"Not at all."

Clyde grasped the tricycle and lugged it back to the room behind the curtains. As he passed Gwen he flashed her a smile. Her responding glance held a nuance of peculiar entreaty.

Nerves. Clyde pondered on the question as he wrapped the gift. Long hours and grueling work took their toll. He'd reached the point where he was imagining things. Just because an unusually tall man had a bored brat of a son, he had let his fancy run riot.

Maybe the old boy did take drugs. Perhaps the kid was a prodigy, or at least precocious. What was so unusual in that? Much ado about nothing.

Well, in an hour the toyshop would close and he'd give the ring to Gwen, and they'd go somewhere and have a quiet holiday drink together—forget all this nonsense about giant's eyes.

There!

Deftly, Clyde completed the gift-wrapping, his red hair hanging over his forehead as he frowned in concentration. Brushing back the loose strands, he grasped the package and marched back into the shop.

The crowd was thicker now. But as his eyes moved over the confines of the toyshop, Clyde realized that the old man and his son were gone.

They had disappeared!

A curious tingling crept along his spine. Hastily, he glanced behind the counters on either side of the toyshop. Where was Gwen?

The tingling merged into a lurching shudder.

Gwen had vanished!

Mustering his confidence, Clyde strode down the counter. Old Propper's bald head gleamed as he bent over a tray of toy soldiers.

"Pardon me, Mr. Propper," Clyde murmured. "Have you seen Gwen?"

"Gwen? She was over there just a minute ago. Talking to the big man."

"But he's gone."

"I know, Clyde. I saw him go out with the little boy."

"Gwen didn't leave with them, did she?"

Clyde felt foolish as he asked the question, but he couldn't hold it back.

Propper stared at him. "Of course she didn't," he snapped. "She must be in the back room. Where else?"

Clyde didn't answer. He knew Gwen wasn't in the back room. Still, he stepped through the curtains once more.

The room he had just quited was still empty. And over on the wall were the hangers. Hangers that held Gwen's fur

coat and perky little green hat.

She couldn't have run out into the snow without putting them on.

Heart pounding, Clyde retraced his steps. He surveyed the toyshop quickly. He tried to recollect his movements.

He had gone in to wrap the tricycle. He had left the giant standing there, behind that counter near the corner. And Gwen had been across the aisle.

All very simple. And what did it matter? The giant wasn't an ogre, or a demon. He couldn't have whisked Gwen through the walls. Besides, Mr. Propper had seen the tall man and the little boy go out of the shop—alone.

Still, Gwen was gone.

And the tall man and the child had whispered together and pointed at her . . .

CLYDE knew he was behaving like a fool as he rounded the counter in the corner. Here was an alcove hidden from the rest of the shop. A little recess in the wall.

The giant had stood near here. If he beckoned Gwen over, they'd be standing unobserved.

Still, what good would that do? What did it mean——?

Then Clyde's moving left foot encountered a soft, tangling encumbrance.

He almost stumbled over the pile. Hastily he glanced down. Glanced down and saw the disheveled bundle on the floor.

Gwen's clothes!

There was her black dress. Yes, and beneath it her stockings, still in her shoes! And beneath that, a brassiere, a slip.

Clyde knelt and fingered the garments.

They were still warm, still bore the imprint of Gwen's body.

Gwen's clothes, in a tangled heap on the toyshop floor.

And where was Gwen?

Clyde's groping fingers encountered a small, hard length lying against the counter. He grasped a hidden object, held it up.

A pencil stub. A pencil stub from Gwen's order book.

He ran his right hand in swift exploration across the floor near the pile of garments.

In a moment he found Gwen's order book, raised it.

The top sheet was covered with a sprawling scrawl—not the neat lettering of Gwen's precise handwriting on an order—just an awkward scribble.

But as Clyde read it, his senses spun.

Merely a name, and an address. But somehow, Clyde know there was a connection. He deciphered the wobbly lettering:

"Simon Mallot. 4954 Archmore Court. Clyde——"

Just that, and nothing more. *"Clyde,"* was the last word. The end of the "e" had been abruptly drawn out in a jagged slash across the page. As though Gwen had been interrupted in her message.

As though Gwen had shrieked for help just as a hand closed over her mouth. A hand like a dinner plate. The hand of a giant!

CHAPTER II

The Giant's Castle

THE streets of Manhattan were thronged with holiday revelers. Scarcely ten minutes had elapsed since Clyde had read the peculiar scrawl on Gwen's order book, and yet swift strides had already carried him far uptown, towards Archmore Court.

Old Man Propper had accepted his hastily-worded excuse and let him go with a curt nod of his bald head. Now, his overcoat wrapped tightly around

him as a shield against the fine-spun snow, Clyde forced his way through the mob with flailing arms.

It was impossible to find a cab, and his impatience brooked no delay. His pace increased, his stride lengthened.

Curious thoughts churned through his head.

Christmas Eve!

Bells tolled their rejoicing in his ear, and yet Clyde heard only the resonance of a funereal note—a note of doom.

Holiday merrymakers called their cheery greetings—Clyde listened to a voice within himself: the voice of Gwen, screaming his name.

Christmas time . . . festival time! Clyde thought of older, pagan festivals. Festivals dedicated not to a kindly Christ-child, but to older, darker gods. Gods of blood and sacrifice. Gods that granted black booms—and took a grisly toll. Gods that were worshipped by pale-faced men with set and staring eyes. Deep-set, fanatical eyes . . . like the eyes of the giant

Simon Mallot.

That was his name. But *who* was he, really? And *what* was he?

4954 Archmore Court.

Where was it, and *what* was it?

Clyde clutched the order book in his pocket and hurried along.

His way led him now through quieter side streets. Streets where no Yuletide lights shone in the windows. Streets given over to winter wind and midnight shadow. Streets that coiled and twisted their snowy surfaces beckoning down to darker depths.

Clyde felt like a pigmy running along on the back of some fabulously enormous serpent. A snow-serpent wound around between the looming buildings. Soon he would reach the serpent's head, the serpent's fangs, the serpent's blazing eyes.

Blazing eyes——

Clyde saw the lights before him. He knew, instantly, that this was the place. The great house stood set back from the street. A stone wall guarded the tree-girdled grounds. But the huge structure loomed above it on a little eminence of land. From a block away, Clyde could see the glittering lights in the lower windows.

Fantastically enough, the brightest cluster radiated from a rainbow-hued Christmas tree set fully visible against broad French windows on the ground floor.

Clyde paused before the outer gate long enough to read the numerals. 5954. This was it!

He marched up to the steps, faced the outer door. Then, and only then, did he pause.

What would he do?

Clyde knew how to gain admittance. He had Gwen's scrawled order slip with Simon Mallot's name on it. And he'd hastily wrapped a small package. He was there to "deliver" it.

But after that——

Clyde didn't know. Would he accuse Mallot of murder? Kidnaping? Forcing Gwen to do a strip-tease?

It didn't make sense. Only his hideous hunch made him persist. It might all be a hysterical fantasy, a delusion. But he had to find out. He had to get inside this house and see Mallot. Maybe there'd be a clue—or, on the other hand, a perfectly sensible and obvious explanation. Maybe he'd end up in jail for creating a scene and making ridiculous accusations.

HE HAD to take the chance.

His fingers, numb with cold, reached out and groped for a bell buzzer.

The great oaken door was smooth.

Stabbing pain lanced his finger-tips. Pain? Cold. Icy coldness, as he felt

a round object under his palm.

A door-knocker.

Clyde raised it, let it fall. A hollow clang resounded.

The wind drowned all sound of approaching footsteps from within. But suddenly the door swung open, a fan of light poured forth.

Clyde looked up automatically, anticipating the seven-foot bulk of the giant.

But it was a small man who answered his summons. A small man dressed in discreet evening clothes. A butler.

"Yes sir?"

"I'm from Propper's toyshop," Clyde explained. "I've this package for Mr. Mallot." He extended his slip and revealed the brown parcel in his pocket.

"Very good." The butler took it and prepared to turn away.

"It—it isn't paid for," Clyde mumbled. "I was told to wait."

The butler frowned. "This is rather unusual," he said. "Mr. Mallot left no instructions." He coughed. "I'll call him."

The door began to close.

Clyde stepped forward hastily. His foot wedged in the doorway with all the dexterity expected of a Fuller Brush man.

"Could I wait inside?" he asked. "It's rather brisk out here."

The butler hesitated, shrugged.

"Very well," he said. "You may wait in the hall if you like."

Clyde entered the spacious hallway.

Burdened by suspicion, Clyde was prepared for almost anything. He expected a long, dimly-lighted corridor; gloomy, paneled walls, ancient tapestries.

Instead, he stood in a completely modern hallway, brilliantly illuminated to highlight cream-colored walls. Silver mirrors added a cheerful touch.

The butler faded from view. Clyde stood there, fidgeting and gazing down at the French blue of the carpeting.

There was a sliding door open at one side. A still greater brilliance coruscated from the room beyond. Clyde stepped to the doorway.

He stared into a spacious side parlor. The room was immense, with high walls running up to an adroitly domed ceiling. One side only was graced with long French windows. Against the windows reared the dazzling ornamentation of a tremendous Christmas tree.

The tree cast glowing benediction over the room. Sparkling lights were strung through the pine bows. Great globular and pendant ornaments flashed and shone on the branches. Icicles and tinsels festooned each twig.

There was something soothing and reassuring in the sight of this holiday emblem. Clyde's unformulated fears fell away. Surely there was some mistake. There was nothing but Christmas in this house.

As if to confirm this judgement, the rest of the room offered mute testimony in corroboration. Clyde saw that the floor was covered with gift packages and parcels in gay wrappings. Toys were scattered about in abundance. Blocks, tin soldiers, roller skates—he recognized the familiar offerings of the Yuletide. Around the entire room ran a border of steel in the form of tracks for a toy railroad train.

This must be Roger's playroom. The typical playroom of a rich man's son. Now it was cheery and homelike, in keeping with the Christmas spirit.

CLYDE sighed. There *must* be some mistake! Could it be that the giant had given the wrong name and address? Could he have been clever enough to know that Gwen might leave it as a clue?

It was probably so. Clyde had been sent off on a wild-goose chase. He must retrace his steps to the shop, start all over again. For surely there was no evil *here*.

He'd only be making a fool of himself if he stayed. When a stranger came down to pay him, he'd be in a mess. He could sneak out right now. No one would notice. Perhaps——

Then Clyde heard the voice.

It was like the voice of Conscience—faint and far away. High and shrill, from inside his brain.

"Clyde!" the voice wailed. "Clyde. I'm here. Save me!"

Nerves. He was tired. Hallucinations must be shaken off, ignored.

"Clyde!"

No! The voice was not illusion. He *did* hear it; a tiny wailing from far away. Heard and recognized the thin cry.

"Clyde! Look at me here—here I am."

He whirled around, startled. His eyes searched the room. Of course there was no one visible.

Could it be coming through the floor, the ceiling, the walls? No. It wasn't muffled. The sound, however faint, was clear and unblurred.

"Over here! Hurry!"

The voice came from near the windows. Clyde moved closer to the tree. The brilliant light threw every inch of the room there into high relief. He saw nothing.

Clyde stared dully at the tree, and the voice wailed higher and higher.

"Here I am, darling. Here," the voice implored. "Here I am—on the tree!"

Suddenly the world exploded. Through the mist came a crimson flash of comprehension. Clyde stared at the Christmas tree and *saw*.

Hanging from an upper branch of the Christmas tree, midway between an ornament and a candy cane, was a cellophane envelope. It dangled by a length of blue ribbon and swung to and fro.

Within that envelope, neatly wrapped in cellophane, was the writhing figure of Gwen.

Gwen—shrunken to two inches in height!

CHAPTER III

The Tall Man Again

"CLYDE, I knew you'd come! Thank heaven you found me in time!"

Clyde struggled to control his voice and features as he stared at the incredibly tiny figure on the tree. "What happened?" he muttered hoarsely.

"It was the tall man," answered the girl. Her voice came faintly through the cellophane. Clyde bent closer and scowled.

"I knew it!" he sighed.

"He sent you into the back to wrap a package. That was a trick. He must have planned it that way. Because he beckoned for me to come over.

"He and the boy were standing next to the alcove in the far corner. He had a toy in his hands and he asked me how much it cost.

"All the while he kept staring at me with those eyes of his. Those eyes! I told you how I remembered them from the time he'd come in before. Deep, burning eyes.

"But as I stood there, I realized he had never *really* looked at me until now. He gazed at me . . . and through me . . . and then *into* me.

"I could feel it! His eyes *reached* inside of me and plucked out my consciousness. I knew it. Knew he was hypnotizing. But all the while another part of me knew that he was going right on talking, smiling, behaving normally

in case anyone happened to look into the alcove. Only his eyes held me, and gloated and stared.

"I couldn't look away. I swear it—I'd have given my soul to look away, but I could not. And once he looked at me, I no longer had a soul to give. He was drawing it into his eyes. Into those deep, dark glowing pools, as he stood there with his red lips smiling in his huge white face . . . I felt the world swim around me . . .

"His long, slim hands reached into his pocket and pulled out something. I couldn't see what it was.

"I managed to choke out something. I had to speak, pretend I didn't know what we both knew—that his eyes held me so.

"I asked him for his name and address and if he wanted this toy delivered.

"He answered, and my hand wrote it down on the pad. You see, I knew already that I must warn you. Of what, I couldn't guess. But those eyes had me and I knew they wouldn't let me go.

"So I scrawled it off, but he only grinned, and I know the child was grinning too. And then his eyes seemed to get larger, like two burning moons. They rocketed up towards my face and I know my order book dropped out of my hands and then he ran his long fingers across my arm.

"I felt something pinch me. There was a tingling sensation near my elbow and then—I fell into those two burning moons. They rushed up and became one solid lake of orange fire, and I—I drowned.

"When I came to, I was here—on the tree."

CLYDE stared at that tiny, incredible body. It couldn't be true, and yet it was. The girl was Gwen. Cellophane-wrapped, yet nude save for the blue ribbon fastened about her hips. She looked exactly the way Clyde had always teased her about—like a doll. A human, living doll!

How had it happened? And why?

No time to consider that now. For Gwen's diminutive face puckered in utter panic.

"What can we do?" she whispered.

Clyde straightened up. The scowl seemed a permanent part of his features now.

"The first thing to do is get you out of here," he declared. "Quickly, before Simon Mallot comes back."

He stretched out his left hand cautiously and unfastened the cord of blue ribbon from the tree-branch. He lifted down the cellophane pouch containing the tiny living girl.

Gently, he eased it into his coat pocket.

"Plenty of air for you," he murmured. "Just be still and don't worry. I'll get you out of here and then—we'll see."

Clyde turned on tiptoe and headed for the open door. He moved swiftly, silently.

Something swifter and more silent slithered through the doorway and ran across his path.

A black cat melted into the room. Clyde glanced down at it, startled: glanced into the cat's great, green, glowing eyes.

Then Clyde looked up—and stared into the great, glowing eyes of Simon Mallot!

The giant towered in the doorway. He stood there quietly and smiled.

Clyde returned no answering smile as he surveyed the gigantic figure of the tall man. Simon Mallott was wearing a long white lounging robe, blending uncannily with his pale skin. But his lips shone redly and his eyes glared blackly as he stooped and clasped his elongated

fingers about the body of the cat.

He lifted the black cat to a perch on his shoulders, but all the while he riveted his glance on Clyde. The cat added its baleful stare. Both cat and man wore a smirk of feline malice.

"Were you leaving?" asked the giant. The deep voice droned mockingly.

"Yes—I must get back to the shop." Clyde essayed a smile.

"Not so hastily, I hope," said Simon Mallot. "Won't you stay and share our holiday hospitality?"

"Sorry, but I haven't time," Clyde muttered. "I must do my own celebrating later."

"Very well—if you insist."

To his surprise, Clyde saw the giant step aside from the doorway. A huge arm swooped outward in a gesture of polite dismissal.

Clyde walked from the room.

He'd made it!

"One moment."

THE voice was even, but there was a sardonic undertone.

Clyde turned.

"Before you leave," said Mallot, smoothly, "you might return my property to me."

"Property?"

"Exactly." Mallot smiled.

"What might that be?"

"Just a little thing—a mere toy—an ornament from my Christmas tree."

Clyde couldn't control his voice, any more than he could control the gooseflesh on his neck.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he gasped.

"Ah. Then perhaps—this—will stimulate your memory."

"This" proved to be a gun. Mallot pulled it from the pocket of his white robe. It was a big Luger, but it looked like a child's cap-pistol in the great hand of the giant. Still, it was large enough for Clyde. And it did impress him—particularly when Mallot pointed the muzzle at his heart. Mallot's grin was as cold as the steel of the gun-barrel.

"You know I'll kill you instantly if you don't obey," said Mallot.

Clyde knew.

There was nothing else to do. Hand trembling, he groped in his overcoat pocket and drew out the cellophane package—the little package that (grotesque thought!) contained all that he loved in the world.

Gwen's fear-filled face stared up at him in a perfect miniature of horror.

Then the great hand extended and swept the cellophane from Clyde's palm. Fingers thick as d y n a m i t e sticks squeezed the tiny body of the girl. She squirmed helplessly in the giant's grasp.

Mallot grinned, baring tusk-like teeth in a smile that held only gloating mirth.

"My little boy would be so disappointed if he found his new toy missing. He had his heart set on Miss Thomas for a plaything."

"Plaything?" Clyde choked out the word.

"Yes." Casually, the Luger moved forward, forcing Clyde back into the great room. Mallot closed the door and then turned to the Christmas tree. Three enormous strides took him over to the window. Carefully, gently, he hung Gwen's cellophane pouch back on the branches. Then he turned to the young man once more.

"Roger is a most unusual child, as you will discover. He has quite eccentric tastes—and it is my pleasure to encourage them."

Clyde couldn't hold it back any longer. Forgetting the Luger, forgetting all caution or diplomacy, he burst out in frantic rage.

"You monster! I don't know how

"You know I'll kill you instantly if you don't obey," said Mallot

you did this, or what you intend, but you can't get away with it!"

Mallot laughed. The windows rattled.

"A rather melodramatic speech," he observed. "It might sound more convincing if you had this to emphasize your sentiments." He glanced at his Luger significantly. He began to come closer, and Clyde saw the outthrust muzzle of the weapon level at his heart once more.

"Naturally, now that you have been so—frank—I would be foolish to allow you to depart," said the giant, suavely. "So perhaps I had better——"

The great eyes flickered. Mallot halted. "No," he purred. "Perhaps I'm just a sentimental fool. The season, you know—holiday spirit and all that sort of thing. But I won't kill you. Besides, it might spoil Roger's Christmas if he knew."

He stared at Clyde. Again, the gloating smile.

"You have red hair," he commented. "Roger should find you amusing."

The giant stalked closer. "Yes," he said. "It would be a surprise, too."

Clyde watched and waited. He tried to look at the black cat perched on Mallot's shoulder. But out of the corner of his eye, he watched the approaching muzzle of the gun. It was so small, compared to the vast bulk of the giant. But there was a chance. If he could leap forward, grab the gun, turn it on Mallot, now——

Clyde waited. He stared at the cat's glaring eyes. The gun came close. The giant smiled. Clyde stood poised, ready. He tensed to spring —

More quickly than the eye could follow, Mallot's free hand darted forward. Clyde went for the gun, but as he moved he felt the giant's great paw brush his elbow. There was a faint prickling sensation in his arm.

The sensation rose, magnified with incredible acceleration. For an instant Clyde felt his sweaty palms close about the Luger's muzzle. For a fraction of a second he knew he was struggling forward. Then everything whirled and there was nothing but the eyes of the cat on Mallot's shoulder—eyes looming up larger and larger. Great, green liquid eyes.

Clyde fell forward, fell into the eyes, drowned deep in an emerald lake.

CHAPTER IV

The Enormous Room

IT'S hard to awaken from a nightmare. The darkness has tentacles, and the inky strands are imbedded deep in your brain, trying to pull you back—trying to pull you down once more into the screaming depths.

Clyde fought the tentacles, fought the clutching filaments of fear, struggled into consciousness.

He blinked, opened his eyes fully.

It was morning.

He couldn't see clearly, but he recognized daylight around him. He turned his head, shook away the confusion. Now his body tingled with awareness once more. He could feel a constriction under his armpits, a tension.

Clyde looked down. A great bolt of yellow cloth swathed his body. The ends of the bolt were drawn under his arms, passed up somewhere behind his head. He was hanging suspended by the bolt of cloth. No wonder there was pressure!

Yes, he was h a n g i n g—but from what?

Clyde glanced down. And then he knew.

He was hanging from the Christmas tree—hanging from the tree as Gwen had hung there the night before!

With a thrill of horrified recognition he stared down—down past a million swirling constellations—down past the glacial splinters of a thousand icicles—down through a forest of bristling spears—down at the far-away floor of the enormous room.

Miles away he discerned the gleaming tracks of a railroad line and the huge cluster of yards and terminals. Columns of soldiers marched across the great plateau in the center of the open area, marched towards the rearing towers of a mighty city.

Of course! The city was made of building blocks. The soldiers were lead and tin. The railroad was a toy train and the tracks against the wall were not miles away, but a mere fifty feet.

The sky so far above was just the domed ceiling. But if that was so—why did the sun hurt his eyes?

It blazed with fiendish intensity as he squinted off into the distance.

Then Clyde realized that the brilliance came from the lights on the Christmas tree from which he hung. The swirling constellations were glittering ornaments. The glacial icicles were merely tinfoil decorations. The forest of bristling spears was made up of pine needles on the branches of the tree.

He had suffered Gwen's fate. He was a mannikin, two inches high. A doll, hanging by a yellow ribbon, on a Christmas tree. The way Gwen had hung. . . .

Gwen!

He turned. The ribbon swayed gently as he moved his neck.

Gwen hung there, almost at his side. She was sleeping—her head hung in utter exhaustion as he gazed at her through her protective wrapper of cellophane.

"Gwen!" he whispered. She did not stir.

Then he realized that the volume of his tiny voice no longer mattered.

"Gwen!" he shouted.

Her blue eyes opened. She stared, recognized him.

"Clyde, darling! I saw him do it to you—he had a needle in his hand. A very tiny needle. He jabbed it into your elbow—you fell, and then——"

"Yes?"

Her faint voice trembled and she turned away. He could hear her murmuring faintly.

"Oh, it was horrible! It happened so suddenly, so quickly! You just seemed to *shrivel up* inside your clothes. One minute you were standing there, and the next—you were gone. Your clothes just fell to the floor. Stockings still in the shoes, shirtsleeves still tucked into your trousers, and the overcoat still covering your suit.

"Mallet reached down and plucked you out of your own trouser-cuff! You lay there like a tiny doll, and he wrapped you in the yellow ribbon and hung you on the tree here.

"He must have used the needle on me, too—after hypnotizing me in the shop. It just takes an instant. No wonder nobody noticed, and he could walk out so easily—with me in his pocket! And now he's done it to you. Oh, darling, what can we do? What can we do?"

CLYDE would gladly have given his life for the answer, but it was not forthcoming. And as he groped for words, for consolation and reassurance, there was an interruption.

A wind swept through the tree. And then, ponderously from below, the tremor of an earthquake rocked and vibrated.

It took Clyde a moment to realize that the wind came from the opening of the door, and the earthquake tremor was the thud of footsteps.

A giant thundered into the room.

A giant? Clyde recognized the boy, Roger.

Last night he had been a little child. This morning he was a huge creature, massive as a mountain.

He ran into the room, uttering a boyish whoop that smote Clyde's tiny eardrums like the drums of death.

"Where is it?" he yelled. "Where's the surprise?"

A face like a billboard illustration loomed before the figures on the tree.

Clyde stared at the great ridged nose, the flaming open-hearth furnace of the mouth, and the great bloated globes of Roger's rolling eyes. They were huge white balloons with dark centers. A network of red veins crawled like serpents across the milky white portions.

Clyde stared into the pupils as though viewing the reflecting mirrors on a gigantic telescope. Stared at his own image.

"Look! They're alive!" yelled Roger.

His gigantic paws reached out. His hand almost brushed Clyde's body, but reached past it as the boy took Gwen from the tree. His clumsy fingers tore away the cellophane. Clyde writhed in fury as her body wriggled in the pudgy palm of the boy.

Then the world reeled as Clyde felt himself lifted from the tree by his yellow ribbon. He heard booming laughter from above, then sickened as his body took a roller-coaster dip through space. He had been deposited on the floor.

His bare feet sank into the carpet. Fringes rose like grass about his ankles.

A few feet away—inches, really—Gwen was tottering along. Circulation was slowly being restored to her numbed limbs. Clyde moved towards her, thankful as he felt the blood surge painfully to the soles of his feet.

"Gwen. Are you all right?"

Suddenly something red blocked his path. Clyde turned and a heavy weight struck him behind the knees. He fell.

The boy had tripped him with his finger.

Booming laughter came from blocks above them in empty air.

"I'll build you a house," roared Roger's voice.

The hand scooped down, grasped them both, and took them for a dizzying elevator ride. Up and down again on another portion of the carpet. They tumbled out, gasping.

The hand came down once more, depositing a six-foot wooden wall at their backs. Clyde turned. Wall? It was merely a 2-inch building block with the letter B raised on its surface.

"A house," echoed the voice.

Another block appeared before them. And another. In a few seconds, a score of blocks were solidly piled on all four sides of the tiny figures. The light was blotted out and they crouched in the gloom. The second and third tiers of blocks trembled.

So did Clyde.

If that crazy kid made a mistake and one of the blocks wasn't properly balanced—it would slip down and kill them both!

What a fate . . . to be crushed to death by an alphabet block!

A VOICE boomed from above them —a voice with echoes that reverberated more deeply than Roger's tones.

"Breakfast, Master Roger."

It was the voice of the butler. Clyde recognized it, distorted as it was, and magnified a hundred-fold.

He heard Roger grumble from outside the block-house.

"All right," he said. "I'm coming. Just as soon as I put a roof on this house."

A block appeared in the opening above their heads and wedged itself down tightly, balancing on three sides of the walls. A faint crevice of light remained on the fourth side which the roof-block didn't touch.

The roof-block trembled as Roger's footsteps thudded across the room. Then, silence.

"He's gone," whispered Gwen. "Now what?"

"Watch me." Clyde almost grinned. This was his chance and he was ready.

"You can't possible push these heavy blocks aside," Gwen sighed, anticipating a move on his part.

"I don't intend to," Clyde answered. "But the letters on these blocks are raised. I can climb up on the lettering. If I get to the top, I can topple that roof-block off. It's resting pretty loosely."

"But it's twenty feet to the top—you'll fall!" Gwen objected.

"Worth trying," Clyde grunted.

The redheaded young man glanced around in the gloom. The letter B loomed at his left.

"Here goes," he announced.

Hands found a lodging, toes a foothold, and Clyde wriggled his way up the side of the block.

L was the next step, and Clyde managed to literally "shinny" his way up the angular six-foot letter. The O above it was much easier to follow. Clyde hung to the upper rim and slowly forced his head and shoulders through the crevice open at the roof.

"Gwen!" he called. "Stand back against the wall. I'm going to rock this block off by its own momentum—but it may fall inside. Look out!"

Bracing his legs against the upper loop of O, Clyde grasped the rough, splintered edges of the roof-block and tugged. It gave perceptibly. He swayed back and forth. Soon the block teetered on a widening arc. He felt it tremble, sway outwards——

"Here goes!" he shouted.

With a thunderous crash, the block hurtled down to the carpet below.

Clyde trembled. That noise!

Then he realized that the noise was proportionately inaudible to normal human ears. He grinned.

"Now we're clear, darling," he called. "Climb up the letters. I'll reach down and pull you up."

GWEN joined him, gasping for breath. Her lovely black curls hung in bewitching disarray across her bared shoulders. Clyde pulled her up to the top of the block-heap and took her in his arms.

There was a single blissful moment—but that was all.

"Now, down the sides," Clyde commanded. "Hurry!" He slid down C, clambered down an H, and finally stood on the topmost loop of an R as he assisted Gwen in her descent. At last they stood safely outside the block-house once again.

"Now where?" asked the girl.

Clyde bit his lip. Her words merely echoed his own confusion. They were free of the wooden prison—but how to attain greater freedom?

The vast green expanse of the carpet stretched endlessly before them. The white door was a mile away. And as they walked, their tiny feet sank deeply into the nap of the carpet. Sharp ends bit into their heels.

"Clyde—I can't go any further——"

Panic and desperation made the girl blurt out the words.

Panic and desperation gave Clyde his inspiration.

His eye had caught the gleam of metal against the wall, where the carpet ended. A huge contrivance rested there—a great metal cart on gleaming

wheels, ponderous as a juggernaut.

"A roller-skate!" Clyde murmured. "Come on."

Grabbing Gwen's hand, he dashed toward the edge of the carpet.

"Climb aboard," he directed. "You see how the floor slants here a bit down to the door? I'll just give this skate a shove, climb on behind, and we'll coast down to the door in a jiffy."

It was a struggle for Gwen to mount the skate, and her blue ribbon was shredded before she reached the top. By that time Clyde was bracing his shoulder against the left rear wheel of the skate, wisely gauging it as the one most likely to be set in motion.

Straining, his muscles bulging with effort, Clyde pushed. The skate moved slowly . . . then gathered speed. It began to roll down the incline.

Clyde clambered aboard at a trot, swinging up just as the skate gathered momentum. They whirled down toward the open door.

"We'll go right through," Clyde exulted. "Right down the hall outside! And then——"

The black shape loomed before them even as he spoke. The black sabre-tooth, twenty feet tall—eyes glaring green fire, jowls slavering for the kill, yellow fangs gaping, claws raised to rend and destroy . . . It was the cat!

A single bound carried it through the doorway. It paused, hissed, and then bore down upon the two figures crouching on the flat top of the moving roller-skate.

"Quick!" yelled Clyde. "Jump off!"

Gwen obeyed. Clyde didn't move. The skate rolled directly towards the oncoming cat. Clyde saw it raise a paw, ready to rake him off as the skate passed. He crouched low as the paw swooped down.

He felt the shaggy blanket of fur brush his back and twisted to one side.

The cat had missed!

And now the skate had carried him beyond. He had almost reached the door. The black cat whirled. A single bound brought it forward. Another leap and it would be upon him.

CLYDE slipped from the moving skate, eyes roving frantically around the enormous room.

Then he spied it, scarcely three inches away—a long green blade with a sharp point.

A fallen needle from the Christmas tree!

But it was a weapon. Clyde grasped it and rose to face the charging cat. The gigantic head rose above him, and the huge jaws yawned. A paw swept out.

Clyde thrust the sharp point of the pine-needle upwards. It pricked the cat's paw. The feline yowled and withdrew its claws. Then it leaped.

Clyde felt, rather than saw it soar over his head. The wind grazed his hair. And now, in a single instant, the great cat was behind him. The black bulk of its body moved down on him. A ranking claw thrust out. Clyde jabbed with his weapon.

Quick as lightning, the other paw came down. The pine-needle was brushed from his hand, and a numbing shock traveled up his arm.

Clyde stooped to pick up the needle. It was broken—he was weaponless! Now he was ready prey, and so was Gwen.

And the cat charged.

There was no escape this time. Clyde darted to one side, dodged. The cat landed on its forepaws a good foot away. But as it landed, its long black tail coiled out in a lashing blow.

Clyde felt it strike his knees from behind, felt it coil around his waist as he fell. Trapped, he waited as the cat

turned, with out-flexed paws, and launched itself at his throat—

The blackness bore down upon him and he felt the hot breath of the gaping mouth as the fangs ripped towards his head.

CHAPTER V

The Wreck of the Number Nine

THE fangs never reached their goal. As Clyde prepared himself for that final stab of blinding pain, the darkness seemed to lift from before him.

It *did* lift—for a hand came out of the air and grasped the black cat by the scruff of the neck.

"Scat!" thundered a voice.

Clyde lay there looking up as Roger picked up the feline and carried it from the room. Roger closed the door and returned.

"Tried to hurt my playthings," mumbled the boy. He stared down at Clyde.

"But how did you two get out of the block-house?" he asked.

Clyde shrugged his tiny shoulders in reply.

"You were trying to get away, weren't you " Roger accused. "You tried to hide from me! Maybe I'd better hang you up for safe-keeping while I finish breakfast."

Roger suited his actions to the words. He stooped down and Clyde rose on his palm. A stride carried the boy over to where Gwen lay. She tumbled into the moist, slippery surface of Roger's hand and clung to Clyde as they swayed towards the tree.

Roger adjusted the ends of the blue ribbon and the yellow ribbon. Once more the two mannikins dangled like ornaments on the great Christmas tree.

Clyde groaned inwardly as he found himself right back where he had started. Once more the door—escape —freedom—all were miles away.

Rogers smiled down on the two hanging figures.

"Be quiet, now," he said. "I'll come back as soon as I finish eating."

His footsteps thundered from the room. Once again there was silence.

Clyde turned his head. Gwen smiled at him bravely. His heart wrenched as he realized the effort she was making to appear cheerful.

But suddenly her assumed optimism faded. "Oh, darling," she sighed. "I guess it's hopeless. We'll be here forever. And——"

Her dainty little body shook in a sudden spasm of sobbing.

"What's the matter, honey?" Clyde whispered.

"Oh—it's so terrible! And I'm all scratched and bruised, and I'm practically starving."

Clyde forced a smile. "Good for you to go without food," he told her. "You always said you wanted to reduce."

"Reduce!" A fresh burst of tears coursed down her doll-like cheeks.

Clyde frowned as he realized the ironic cruelty of his remark. She was reduced indeed!

Then his eyes lighted on a vast object hanging directly before him.

"Cheer up, small fry," he called. "I think I can get you a bite to eat, anyway."

HE BEGAN to pump his legs outward, swinging his body forward and back. The movement caused the ribbon by which he was suspended to swing in a slow arc. Clyde, at the bottom of this pendulum, swung forward with increasing speed. Soon he was approaching the great white object with every swing.

It hung there, like a ten-foot snowball, right in his path. His tiny fingers clawed at its rough, corrugated surface.

Nothing happened. On the next swing he dug into it deeply. There was a crackling sound, and a huge lump of the white substance broke off in his hands. He swung back and ceased his movements.

Slowly, he broke the white lump and extended a section of it to Gwen. She could just reach out and grab it.

"Go ahead and eat," Clyde told her. "Lucky for us there's a popcorn ball on the tree."

The popcorn was nourishing. Clyde had never thought two people could make a satisfying meal out of a single kernel from a popcorn ball, but this was ample to still his hunger. It didn't take much to fill a tiny stomach. A little condensed milk, now—

As Gwen nibbled her popcorn, Clyde abandoned his fancies and concentrated on another train of thought.

He had swung outward and back to reach the popcorn ball. Then he had stopped. Suppose he kept it up? Suppose he swung in wider arcs until the ribbon on the branch above him loosened?

He might fall, plunge to his death on the jagged pine-splinters below. Still, it was a chance. And it was his only chance.

Thankful that Gwen was occupied only with her food, he began to rock cautiously once more. Soon he swung out to the popcorn ball again; then beyond it. He swooped forward and back. His head reeled, he grew dizzy, but he could feel a movement on the ribbon over his head.

He plummeted up and down, up and down. Now Gwen saw him, and she screamed as he rocketed past. Clyde was giddy, breathless. The world spun around him—the glittering constellation of tree ornaments whirled.

And then—the ribbon came free!

With a gasp, Clyde took the fall. He plunged down, down—shooting through interstices between the bristling branches. Far below him he saw the huge, shining bulk of a crystal globe.

An ornament—he was heading straight towards it! In an instant he would crash, the ornament would shatter, its jagged splinter pierce his body and hurl his bleeding carcass to the floor below.

Clyde's arms flailed wildly. The deadly polished surface rushed up to meet him, and then his right hand found a hold.

With an arm-wrenching lurch, his descent halted. Clyde clung desperately to the strand of tinsel that sustained his weight. For a long moment he could only pant and wheeze. Slowly he drew himself up to a perch on the tinsel.

"Clyde, are you all right?"

Gwen's voice came from above. She hung about forty feet higher—in reality, about fifteen inches over his head.

"Of course I am," Clyde answered. "Hold on and I'll climb up and get you loose."

NOW it was easy to mount the branches, picking footholds and hanging on to tinsel strands and candy-cane lengths. In a very few minutes Clyde had crawled to a niche above Gwen's head and slowly loosened the strand of blue ribbon.

"Grab that branch tip," he directed. "I'll get you free in a moment."

The operation was swiftly accomplished.

"Now what?" Gwen voiced the question as Clyde joined her on the branch. "You aren't going to make me climb down to the floor, are you? I get dizzy just looking at it."

Clyde shook his head.

"No sense in trying the floor again," he said. "Too dangerous, and it's too far to the door. Besides, once in the

hall, we'd need to get the outer door open as well."

"Could we get to a telephone?"

"Not likely," Clyde decided. "Besides, how'd we ever get the receiver off the hook? It would be an engineering problem to dial a number, and I doubt if our voices would carry. Too much danger of detection, anyway. No—that's out."

"Then what can we do?"

"Just keep calm. Look, we have French windows right in back of us. And I've a hunch the one on our left is open a bit. I've felt a breeze for some time. If that window is ajar, we can slip directly outside. All we need do is climb around the side of the tree here and slide down to the window ledge. Can you crawl?"

"I can do anything if it means getting out of here," Gwen declared. Her eyes flashed. Clyde gave her a grin. The girl had spirit and courage.

"All right. Better not waste time, then. The brat is likely to show up at any minute. Suppose we swing down this light-cord?"

Clyde pointed at one of the green strands linking a string of tree lights.

"Just swing across it and move down," he said. "But watch out for the lights. They're hot."

The tiny figures began their journey. Time and time again they clambered across branches to avoid the burning incandescence of a Christmas tree bulb.

"Swing across that tinsel," Clyde grunted. "We're making progress."

Gwen, despite cruelly-smarting hands —giggled.

"What is it?" Clyde turned his head.

"I can't help it! You look so cute in your blue ribbon, swinging along the branches. Just like Tarzan of the Apes."

"He does, does he?"

The voice came from behind them.

Both Gwen and Clyde turned their heads quickly back towards the room.

Standing before the tree, still on tiptoe from his stealthy entrance, was Roger. The boy wore a frown of displeasure.

"At it again?" he said. "Trying to get away!"

There was no hiding-place, no escape.

Advancing quickly, Roger reached forward and plucked Gwen from the tree.

"Let her alone!" Clyde yelled.

"Huh!" grunted the child. "I ought to throw her away." He made a gesture as if to hurl Gwen's body to the ground, and Clyde groaned.

But the gesture was not completed. A smile appeared on the vast bulk of Roger's face.

"I've got a better idea," he said. "I'll really punish you both."

HE TURNED his back and swiftly carried Gwen across the room. Clyde clambered up a branch and strained his eyes, trying to follow the boy's movements.

Roger stooped down on the far side of the room. His hands groped and fumbled before him, but his back hid Gwen from view.

What was he doing to her?

Abruptly, Roger rose. His body still blocking the view on the far side, he approached Clyde with empty hands. Clyde couldn't dodge the searching fingers.

His ribs were crushed between thumb and forefinger as Roger carried him down to the floor.

"In you go," said Roger.

Clyde felt himself being lifted to an iron stand. He glanced down.

Roger had placed him on the cab of his toy train's locomotive!

The locomotive rested on the wide track that ran the full square bordering

the room against the walls.

Clyde stood in the iron cab of the engine. It was a Lionel special model —the *"New York Central,"* to be exact, with a Hudson-type locomotive. Clyde knew. He had sold them in the toy-shop.

He gazed at the shining track stretching ahead, and at the curve near the wall.

Why had Roger put him here?

"I'm going to punish you," said the boy. "The way they did it in the old movies."

"What do you mean?" Clyde shouted.

"Look and see."

Far above, the child's arm extended across the room.

Clyde stared.

Half-way around the circle, on the track directly opposite, lay Gwen's writhing body.

Roger had tied her to the track.

"Notice how I did it?" asked the precocious little monster. "I've tied her to only one of the rails. Only her head extends between. If I laid her directly across she'd be electrocuted when I switch on the transformer.

"As it is, we'll do it like the movies. I'll start the train and you'll run over her."

Roger laughed. It was a cruel laugh, not at all boyish. Clyde shook his head. How could he appeal to this heartless, inhuman creature?

"But you don't want to kill her," he stammered. "A helpless girl——"

"You're my toys," Roger snapped. "I can play with you any way I want."

Abruptly the boy turned. He squatted in the corner, next to the black bulk of the transformer.

There was a whirring hum. And suddenly, Clyde felt the train-wheels turn. The engine was moving beneath his feet!

Slowly, the locomotive gathered speed. Clyde stared out of the cab. He was rushing down the rails, heading for the bend. In miniature time-scale, he was plunging forward at about sixty miles an hour. The engine would take this curve, take the next, go down the straightaway, and in the middle—decapitate Gwen!

THE locomotive lurched as it whizzed around the first curve. Clyde braced himself. He couldn't jump. The second curve loomed ahead. The Hudson type was speedy. A few seconds more, now—

Roger was at the transformer, generating power. Power!

Clyde saw Gwen's body far down the tracks. The locomotive rushed with deadly swiftness.

Clyde gulped. He had the clue, if there was still time. He turned to the cab. Yes, this was the Hudson type. A miniature poker stood in the tender, and next to it was the fire-box door. If that door was opened—

He tore a strand from the blue ribbon about his waist and yanked the tiny poker free. He wrapped the handle of the poker with the ribbon and jerked at the fire-box door.

Peering out the window of the cab he saw Gwen only a little way ahead. The train rumbled on.

Gasping, Clyde jammed the poker through the open door. The end caught. It had to catch, make contact.

It did.

Clyde knew his locomotives. The poker would short on one of the motor terminals against the frame.

The result was spectacular.

The locomotive halted with a lurch, just a few inches from Gwen's tiny form.

At the same moment came a puff of smoke from the transformer, and Roger

fell backwards in a cloud of acrid fumes.

CHAPTER VI

Out of the Mouths of Babes

IT WAS the work of an instant to jump down and release Gwen. Clyde yanked the twine free and helped her to her feet.

"Come on," he whispered.

Over in the corner, Roger's coughing spasm had subsided, and now tears came in a surprising cascade. The boy was crying. The sheer, unexpected shock of the short-circuit had frightened him. Gwen turned and stared at him across the room.

"Gwen—let's go!" Clyde tugged at her shoulder.

Gwen tossed her black curls. "No," she said. "I'm going to talk to Roger."

"Are you crazy?" stormed the red-headed young man.

For answer, Gwen began to stride towards the looming bulk of the boy in the corner.

"Gwen—come back!"

She neither turned nor paused. In sheer amazement, Clyde watched her as she reached the crying child and deliberately tugged at his sleeve. In a moment she was crawling up his arm.

Clyde shuddered.

She sat there, perched on the boy's shoulder!

Roger looked up. Abruptly, his tears ceased falling. Gwen sat on her strange perch and gently patted his neck with one tiny hand.

Roger stared at her. He smiled.

"Blow your nose," said Gwen. "You're a sight!"

Roger blushed, fumbled in his pocket.

"Use your other hand," the girl commanded. "You're likely to shake me off."

Roger obeyed without hesitation.

"There, that's better," she commented. "Now, young man, I'd like to have a talk with you. First of all, you'd better apologize for what you just did."

Roger stared down at her. His blush deepened. Then he looked away at the wall.

"All right," he mumbled. "I'm sorry I tried to kill you. I guess I didn't understand that you are human, too."

Gwen shook her head.

"Don't you know any better?" she chided. "You're a pretty bright-looking boy, it seems to me. Hasn't your mother ever told you not to do such things?"

Roger stared at the wall more intently than ever.

"I—I have no mother."

"Well, what about your father, then?"

"My father's dead, too. I'm an orphan."

Gwen frowned. "But that man who brought you to the toyshop—Simon Mallot. Isn't he your father?"

"No. He adopted me when I was a baby."

"When you were a baby?"

"Yes. After he killed my mother and father."

Roger's voice did not tremble or alter as he spoke the words. His tone was unemotional.

"Simon Mallot killed your parents?" There was horror enough in Gwen's voice.

"Yes. He was in love with my mother many years ago. She wouldn't marry him, because of his size. So after I was born, he killed her."

GWEN was silent, but only for a moment. To Clyde, she seemed to be driving at something. She had taken psychological advantage of the boy, and now she was cleverly pressing that ad-

vantage. She sat there maternally, possessively—the eternal woman engaged in her eternal problem of mastering man.

"How did Mallot kill her?" asked Gwen.

Rogert did not hesitate over an answer. The words came quickly.

"He did it with the dolls. He made dolls and baptized them and then drove pins into their hearts. He's promised to show me how, soon. He's a wizard, you know."

"I didn't know." Gwen was striving to keep calm.

"That's why he adopted me. He's going to make me his apprentice. He'll teach me all he has learned about sorcery. He says that since my appearance is normal, I can be a greater wizard than he is, if I'm properly trained."

The boy spoke as though becoming a sorcerer's apprentice was the most natural course in the world. Gwen tried to match his nonchalance.

"Do you like that idea?" he asked.

Roger frowned. "No—not exactly," he confessed. "There are some things he wants me to do that give me nightmares, and I won't do them.

"I like to play with my toys here, but he is always making me take lessons in his laboratory. And when he finally lets me play, he gives me toys I don't like. I won't keep them here."

"No?"

"There's a book he has . . . and the pictures in it move. They move like people, and they do strange things. It makes your head ache to watch them, but he wants me to study it.

"Then we play games, sometimes. Not with marbles or anything like that, but with little houses and boats and things made out of wax. And he makes me recite pieces in Latin. I get all crawly inside sometimes at the way they sound. When I say them right, the shadows change on the wall, and once I saw the walls move.

"Next year he's going to take me to a meeting. They call it a coven, and I must meet someone there and sign a book in blood. Does it hurt when they prick your finger and take blood?

"I hope it doesn't. Because I don't want to go anyway. I wish he wouldn't make me do those things."

Gwen was white-faced, shaken. The picture she had formed from these childish revelations was ghastly in its implications.

"He won't let me play with other kids," said the boy. "He keeps me locked up here all the time. Once in a while, for a special treat, he lets me play with my regular really-and-truly toys in this room.

"I studied hard last month, so he promised to give me a present. Anything I wanted. And last night, in the toyshop, I asked for you. That's how I got you."

Clyde had approached Roger's feet. Now he spoke.

"How did you know that Simon Mallot could—give—us to you?" he asked.

"He can do anything," said the boy, gravely. "Much more than this. He's a sorceror. And I'll be one too." The boy sighed. "But I don't want to be, really. Besides, I'm afraid when I grow up I might get too big like he is, too."

"How did he get to be so big?" asked Gwenn.

"Just glandular abnormality, he says," the boys answered.

IT WAS fantastic to hear such words from the lips of a seven-year-old child. But then, the whole affair was unearthly.

"He's working on hormone extracts now," Roger confided. "That's how I knew he would be able to shrink you. When I asked to have Gwen for a doll,

he knew what I meant. And he did it. Because that hormone formula is wonderful."

"Yes," said Clyde, eagerly. "Can you explain it a little more than that, Roger?"

"Well, I don't know. He started years ago, trying to experiment on something to use on himself—somethings that might bring him down to a normal size. Then he must have hit on something off the trail with his reduction formula. Because the drug he perfected overdoes the job. Things get very tiny if you aren't careful."

The boy spoke gravely, but Clyde hung on to every word.

"There are lots of specimens upstairs in his laboratory," Roger volunteered. "But I guess he's never used it on human beings until last night. I just begged him to give me Gwen for a toy, and he'd promised me, so he had to do it. But I'm sorry I tried to kill you," he concluded.

Clyde took over. "You should be," he scolded. "And what do you think it feels like to be two inches tall? How would you like it?"

Roger hung his head.

"We don't want to be this way all our lives," Gwen sighed. "How can we get out of this?"

"You two are in love with each other?" Roger's eyes sparkled. "Gee, it's like a story, isn't it? And you're trapped here and everything?"

"You needn't be so enthusiastic about it," observed Clyde, bitterly.

"But it's exciting. And maybe I can help you."

That was the opening Gwen was waiting for. "Yes," she said, quickly. "By all means. You could phone for the police——"

"No good!" Clyde interrupted. "If Simon Mallot found the boy phoning, he'd know. He'd hide us away and punish Roger. Besides, we've got to do something about our size."

"Yes," said the child, eagerly. "That's what I mean. I can find the antidote for you, perhaps."

"Antidote?" Clyde seized upon the word. "There is an antidote?"

"Yes. A sort of by-product or antitoxin you get when you distill the formula. He keeps a bottle of it in the laboratory."

"Could—could you get it for us, do you think?"

Roger's face clouded. "Maybe. I don't know."

"What do you mean? It's a matter of life or death."

"I know. But—honest, I'm afraid to go up there, though. It's a horrible place."

Gwen patted his shoulder.

"There, now. Don't be afraid. I'll come along with you."

Surprisingly enough, the suggestion did the trick. Roger beamed.

"Well, if you two will come along ——"

"Sure we will. It's safe, isn't it?" Clyde answered.

"Yes. He's asleep now, in the left wing. I can get the bottle. Just a few drops on the end of a pin will work, I think. But you'll come with me?"

"Right." Clyde took command. "Just slip us into your jacket now. Then head for those stairs. We're going to the laboratory."

CHAPTER VII

The Devil's Toyshop

UP THE dark stairs, down the long hall, and through the outer chambers—Roger tiptoed cautiously into the weird world beyond the laboratory doors.

Gwen and Clyde clung to the edge of

his jacket pocket and peered out into the realms of nightmare.

Here in the vast, sky-lighted room, science and sorcery had met and mated —to produce a hellish amalgam.

Gleaming white laboratory tables, modern as tomorrow, bore a host of ghastly objects straight from medieval myths.

Bell-jars filled with the root of fabled mandrake; trays of herbs and powdered distillates ground from the bones of animals and corpses; all the paraphernalia of mantic mummery was here.

On the shelves the black books mouldered, iron-hasped tomes with crumbling yellow pages illumined with Gothic lettering of another day. Clyde read exotic titles in Latin—*De Vermis Mysteriis*, and the unspeakable *Necronomicon* of Abdul Alhazred.

Glass cabinets guarded instruments and laboratory machines; a switchboard towered incongruously beside a mummy-case; a zodiacal chart lettered in Greek stood next to the latest model of an X-ray unit.

Bunsen burners and powdered bat's blood, test tubes and the hearts of toads, hypodermic needles and corpse-fat candles—all in a gargantuan jumble before the eyes of Gwen and Clyde.

The room was filled with evidences of thaumaturgy. A blue chalk tracing of a pentagon still covered a part of the floor. A pile of smouldering incense fumed sullenly in a covered brazier near the further wall.

But all this was as nothing to the sights Roger pointed out.

The child, with his terrifying mixture of normal boyishness and hideous familiarity with forbidden things, wasted no time in directing the attention of his tiny guests to a strange spectacle.

A tier of glass cubicles stood along one of the big tables. At first glance they appeared to be a row of rectangular aquariums—but there was no water inside, and no fish.

Still, the glass prisons contained living forms.

"Look!" prompted Roger, moving closer. The two little humans gazed down at an incredible spectacle.

In one glass compartment, a rat padded ceaselessly to and fro, red eyes glaring through the transparent walls of its prison.

"Why, it's the right size!" Gwen exclaimed. Suddenly a hand went to her mouth in a gesture of horrified realization.

For the rat *was* the right size in proportion to her present state. But in reality, the rat was a shrunken creature —a living rat the size of an ant!

In the next compartment a guinea pig squatted; a common laboratory guinea pig, no bigger than a human finger!

Beside it, on the left, was a tiny black object that mewed piteously and clawed at the glass as they approached.

"A black cat," whispered Clyde. 'A black cat the size of a baby mouse."

"He injected them with the reduction formula," Roger told the two. "These were his first successes. That cat is the mother of the black cat downstairs. At first, when it was just a kitten, it seemed to know what he had done and clawed and spit at him. Now the cat is grown and doesn't remember. He calls it his 'familiar'. He says all wizards have familiars."

Gwen shuddered. "I don't like it here," she murmured. "Let's get out."

Clyde nudged the boy's chest with a diminutive fist. "Yes," he urged. "Where's the antidote? Let's get it and leave before he wakes up."

"All right." Roger moved quickly. The shrunken humans tumbled back into his pocket.

"Here," he said, reaching into a cabinet set next to a microscope. "Here's where he keeps the bottle."

HIS hand emerged grasping a vial of colorless fluid, stoppered by a cork.

"The needles are on a tray," he said. "I'll take one and we'll sneak back downstairs."

"Good," Clyde muttered. "Quickly, now!"

Roger moved quickly—then halted.

A sound rumbled from below.

A sound crashed through the corridor, to shatter the tiny eardrums of the imprisoned humans with the knell of death.

"He's coming!" gasped the boy.

"Hide us!" Clyde commanded.

"But where?"

"Set us down on the table."

Roger lifted them free. They landed on one of the big laboratory tables.

"Where shall we go?" Gwen panted.

Clyde gazed around, quickly calculating. He grasped her arm.

"Over here," he beckoned. "Climb inside that skull."

To their left the grisly object loomed —a yellowed skull, big as a house contrasted to their present size.

The great hollow eye-sockets stared their eternal eyeless stare. The grinning, fanged jaws leered their eternal mirthless leer.

"Through the jaw," Clyde panted. "Hurry!"

Crawling inside a human skull—the journey was a nightmare. But it meant escape from a more hideous reality outside.

For Simon Mallot entered the room.

The giant wore black, and black was his frown, black the glitter in his piercing eyes as he recognized Roger's presence in the room.

"What are you doing up here?" he demanded, scowling at the boy.

"Just playing," Roger answered slowly, mastering with an effort the urge to tremble.

Clyde and Gwen, peering through the eye-sockets of the skull t r e m b l e d freely.

"Playing, eh?" The tall man stared down at the little boy with a kindly smile.

"I thought you didn't like it here in the laboratory," he observed.

"I—I guess I've changed my mind."

"That is gratifying news." The wizard shook his gray-maned head. His unlined face was bland. "But tell me, Roger—how did you leave your little playmates downstairs?"

"Why, all right, I guess. I hung them back on the tree."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"That's odd." Simon Mallot grinned. "You see, I've just been inspecting the Christmas tree. And they seem to have disappeared."

"Really?" The boy's self-possession was remarkable. He'd learned a lot from his monstrous teacher—but not enough.

For Simon Mallott's grin broadened unpleasantly.

"You don't seem to be very upset about their absence," he purred. "Perhaps you don't like them any more. Perhaps you're tired of them."

"No—no, I think they're wonderful gifts. I want to keep them always."

"And yet when I tell you they've disappeared, you show no surprise. Can it be, Roger, that you are not surprised? Can it be that you know where they are? Can it be that they are here—right now—in this room?"

SIMON MALLOT towered above the child, his great hands clenched.

"Of course not," gasped the boy. "No

——" His hands fumbled nervously at his jacket. A bulge in the pocket caught the wizard's eye.

One great paw darted forward convulsively. There was a ripping sound as the huge fingers tore away part of the jacket, pocket and all.

Simon Mallot held up the vial of reduction-antidote.

"This is not a plaything," he murmured. "Why did you take it?"

Roger was silent.

The giant nodded. "Shall I tell you why?" he whispered. "I think I know. You have been talking to your toys. They have given you bad advice. They have corrupted you, Roger—corrupted you with stupid, human chatter. Isn't that true?"

The child did not answer.

"They asked you to steal this and restore them to normal size, didn't they?"

Still Roger kept silence.

"I'm disappointed in you," observed Simon Mallot. "Haven't I trained you? Haven't I taught you to be calm, unemotional, scientifically detached? They're stupid little pawns, filled with petty human desires, Roger. Not worth noticing. Fit only to be toys. That's what people are, Roger. Toys. Puppets.

"I've given you tiny ones to play with now. But as you grow older, I'll show you how to play with humans without the necessity of reducing their size. I can turn the whole earth into a plaything for you, Roger.

"You have failed me, and I must teach you once again. But I'm willing to start over anew. I will put this vial away, you will tell me where your toys are hidden, and we'll just forget this little incident. Is it a bargain?"

The giant beamed benevolently.

And for the first time, the boy spoke.

"No!" said Roger. "No—I won't tell you! You'll kill them, that's what you'll do. I won't listen to you—you're a monster, an ogre——"

Simon Mallot laughed, but his eyes blazed.

"I see," he muttered. "Yes, I see. They *have* corrupted you, indeed. Already their stupid viewpoints have changed your childish outlook. Now I'm an ogre, am I? You're talking like a character in a fairy tale.

"Very well, Roger. You're not going to be of any use to me in the future. I can see that. My work has been wasted. And so—if your fairy tale imagery is to be carried out, I'm willing.

"From now on, I'm what you called me. An ogre. And you're just a little boy. A little boy in an ogre's castle. Remember your fairy tales, Roger. Do you know what ogres do to little boys?"

THE last words ended suddenly as the massive arms encircled the child's body. Roger screamed once, then subsided as Simon Mallot bore him to the table and began to strap him down efficiently with strips of gauze.

"I'm going to let you join your new friends," he whispered, bending close to the child's face. "You can go back into the miniature universe where petty humans belong, since you're not fit to be a titan, either physically or mentally. Maybe you'll learn something. At least," he chuckled, "at least, I can keep you under my thumb this way."

The giant turned from the bound boy. "Where's the needle?" he grumbled. "It should be next to the formula powder here, in the tray."

Clyde could have answered that question easily.

For midway in the conversation between the tall man and the child, Clyde slipped carefully through the left eye-socket of his hiding place and tiptoed

cautiously along the table. He moved from beaker to retort unobserved, until at least he reached the spot where the jar of yellowish powder lay—the jar Roger had pointed out as containing the reduction formula.

"Only a few grains of the powder on the end of a needle," Clyde remembered.

And there, in the glass tray, was a needle.

As the wizard bound the boy, Clyde tugged the needle free. In his arms it was a heavy four-foot spear. But he raised it, drove the point into the yellowish powder until a few granules clung to the end.

Then he was ready. He staggered under the burden of the heavy needle as he made his way from behind one object to another. Gwen watched his progress with fascinated horror, but Simon Mallot did not see him.

Closer and closer he came—stealing along to the edge of the table.

Now Mallot turned and groped in the tray for his tiny needle.

"Where is the cursed thing?" he growled.

Clyde, poised behind a retort on the edge of the table, stared up, up to the incalculable height where the wizard's pale white face loomed and leered.

The great globed eyes burned down. The red lips writhed. And a groping finger swept along the table.

Clyde braced himself, held the needle pointed out, and then he ran. His running plunge carried him toward the wizard's white, spatulate finger.

Clyde charged with his spear—and then Simon Mallot saw, stared down at the incredibly tiny figure racing towards his hand with outthrust needle.

"So!" he roared.

His hand swept forward, a wall of flesh to sweep Clyde's puny body into oblivion.

But Clyde didn't falter. He held the needle up, felt it strike home as the hand came down. Then the white and bony horror of the hand closed over him, to smother and crush, and Clyde's world fell away. . . .

CHAPTER VIII

Reductio Ad Absurdum

"CLYDE! Wake up, darling!"

Gwen's voice came somewhere through the mists. Clyde tried to locate it. He succeeded, with an effort, and blinked his way to consciousness. Clyde looked up at Gwen, who pillowed his head in her lap as she bent over him on the table's edge.

"Are you all right?" the girl murmured.

"Guess so." Clyde sat up and rubbed his aching shoulder. Abruptly he stiffened, pushed her away.

"Mallot!" he snapped. "Where is he?"

"Down there."

Gwen's tiny finger indicated the floor far below.

"You jabbed him with the needle," she said. "He tried to knock you off the table, but the drug took hold. He begin to shrink immediately."

Clyde peered over the table edge. On the floor, far below, lay a tangled heap of clothing. Mallot's garments. Lying across the bottom of Mallot's robe lay a tiny white figure, scarcely three inches long. It represented all that remained of the giant's seven-foot bulk.

"He's still unconscious," Gwen said.

"Good. Now, our first job is to get Roger free."

Clyde rose and began walking across the table. Gwen followed. Roger lay strapped to another table a few feet away—but a shelf stretched in a natural bridge between.

"Roger, are you all right?" called the redheaded man.

"Yes—but get me loose," said the boy, through trembling lips. "Quick, before he wakes up."

"He can't harm you," Gwen reminded the child. "After all, he's only three inches tall. Just a little bigger than we are."

The crossed along the shelf and soon descended to the table beside Roger's bound body. Clyde had lugged a needle with him.

"You—you aren't going to inject anything into me?" the boy asked.

"Certainly not; But this may help to pry away the knots. He's got the gauze around you pretty tightly."

Indeed, Roger's body was swathed in cloth ropes, and the knots would tax the ingenuity of any number of two-inch high Boy Scouts.

Nevertheless, Clyde and Gwen set to work, tugging away at the recalcitrant cloth, shredding bit by bit with the needle. It was a laborious task. They had scarcely managed to sever a single strand in a full fifteen minutes of effort.

"Maybe we'd better get the growth formula first," Clyde sighed. "He left the bottle of autitoxin on the table over there, I think. If we could use that and regain our normal size once more, the rest would be easy."

It was a good idea—but Clyde wasn't the only one who thought so. For at that moment, Gwen tugged frantically at his arm.

"Look!" she gasped. "He's come to!"

SIMON MALLOT had indeed recovered consciousness. Clyde turned to stare at the tiny figure—a little white-skinned mouse, cautiously clambering up the rungs of a chair. Mallot was climbing to the table top where the antidote rested. Even as they stared, he gained the seat of the chair, ran swiftly across it, and started to crawl up the wicker back, hand over hand. In just a minute or so he would reach the vial of the precious fluid, and then——

"No you don't!" Clyde shouted.

Turning, he headed back across the shelf-bridge to the other table. He bore the heavy needle as a weapon. Gwen followed more cautiously.

Clyde clattered down the shelf, overturning a jar that stood in the path of his flying feet.

He reached the table-top—and so did the wizard.

Simon Mallot's shrunken visage had lost none of its malignancy. The powerful body of the sorcerer still towered —comparatively—over Clyde's frame.

With swift strides, the miniature giant made for the vital vial.

Levelling his needle as a spear, Clyde bore down upon him.

Mallot looked up and scowled his dismay. He backed away from the small bottle.

Clyde pursued him. If he could pin that tiny monster to the table, destroy the evil that animated him——

Mallot scurried away. Clyde gained on him, poised for the throat.

And then Mallot spun to his left, caromed against a small glass beaker.

The beaker swayed, tipped, and suddenly fell forward. Directly in Clyde's path a stream of bubbling acid poured forth, smoking and hissing as it churned towards his ankles.

Clyde swerved to one side as the deadly stream sizzled its way across the table-top.

Mallot had stopped ahead of him—stopped and stooped. He had picked up a needle of his own from a tray, and now he brandished it above his head.

A needle in Clyde's hands was a spear. Mallot, a larger figure, could use it as a sword.

And use it he did. With a roar he charged down upon the young man.

It was Clyde's turn to back away—back and parry the deadly thrusts of the glittering blade. The giant was a fencer, and he flourished the needle with fatal precision.

Clyde retreated, bringing his needle up and down to take the blows of Mallot's weapon. But Mallot stabbed and struck. The needle whistled past Clyde's left ear, then whizzed under his armpit.

And as he went back, Clyde's feet struck a solid base. Something hot and hissing roared behind him. Parrying desperately, he turned.

Mallot was forcing him—forcing him back against the glowing blue flame of a Bunsen burner!

The wizard laughed and his sword-blade swirled down. Clyde ducked. He tried to dodge around the flame, but Mallot pressed his advantage. The needle flicked out, inexorable, relentless.

Suddenly Mallot raised his weapon and brought it down. Clyde felt the impact of the blow shiver against his own needle. And then it fell from his grasp, and rolled to one side.

He was weaponless!

MALLOT bounded in for the kill. Clyde crouched against the base of the Bunsen burner, felt the searing flame just above his neck. He dodged, ran around to the further edge of the table. A portable sink unit was beyond. He hurtled across a chasm fully five inches in extent and landed on the sink.

But the wizard was at his heels. He jumped, brandishing his needle.

Clyde turned, ran along the moist sink, and then slipped.

Too late, he realized his error when he saw what looomed before him in the sink. Too late to move, he heard the roar of mighty waters.

A waterfall cascaded across his path.

Mallot thundered behind him. His blade swept out in an arc of shining death.

Clyde jumped, jumped straight at the waterfall.

And went down under the thundering avalanche, down to the bottom of the sink, gasping and drowning—drowning in the flow from a turned-on water faucet!

Mallot's laugh rose in his ears, and then Clyde went under. The white wall of water enveloped him. He gulped, choked, felt his lungs burn and fill. He rose, fighting for breath. The water churned around him. His hands gasped at a non-existent hold.

Clyde went down again. The water at the bottom of the sink swirled fiercely, carrying him in its circling eddy until he felt himself battered and scraped against the bottom of the porcelain.

He rose to his knees, groping his way from under the direct impact of the faucet flow above. For a moment he stood there, then fell again.

Once more he gained his feet, and this time he managed to blunder blindly to one side.

He stood in water up to his waist, but he was clear of the main stream. He looked up, expecting to see Mallot waiting with poised blade.

The wizard was gone!

Clyde wasted no time. His arms went up, clawing for a hold against the top of the shallow sink. He found it, lifted himself, hung for a straining instant, and pulled himself over the rounded rim.

He lay panting on top of the sink for a moment, utterly exhausted.

When he looked up once more, he was revivified with a thrill of horror.

SIMON Mallot stood on the adjacent table top. Gwen crouched at his feet. The wizard's sword's sword was menacing, forcing her back—back into the gaping mouth of an empty test-tube that lay on its side!

Even as Clyde watched, the girl was lowering her body and wriggling backwards into the tube. Mallot was forcing her with the sword, grinning in hellish anticipation.

Gwen's body, o d d l y elongated through the glass walls of the test tube, now lay inside the round glass. Mallot turned, stooped.

Clyde realized what he was doing. He was going to roll the test-tube over the edge of the table!

Gwen, dropped to the floor below—the glass prison shattering about her——

The tube rolled. And Clyde darted forward. Again he hurtled the chasm between sink and table. He paused only long enough to retrieve his needle weapon.

Then, with a shout, he bore down upon the wizard from the rear.

Mallot looked up, wheeled. Abruptly he halted. The tube rocked on the table edge, rested there.

Mallot looked at his own needle, resting at his feet. There was no time to pick it up. Clyde was almost upon him. And now the pursuer became the pursued as Mallot ran back along the table towards the vial of antidote.

What did he intend to do—make a last stand beside the bottle? Clyde followed, puzzled by the action.

But Mallot halted only for an instant. He stooped and grasped something in his hand, then ran forward once more to the edge of the table and clambered down the back of the chair towards the floor below.

Clyde didn't hesitate. He meant to follow—but what about his needle? It was too heavy to carry. For an instant he pondered. Then he dropped it over the edge to the floor below.

Perhaps Mallot would reach it first—but he had to take that chance.

Clyde reached the chair, crawled down the back. Mallot was below him. Clyde almost slid part-way, in a desperate attempt to narrow the distance between himself and the wizard.

But Clyde was still on the lower rungs as Mallot reached the floor. And then, from his perch, Clyde saw what it was the tiny giant had stooped to pick up.

It was a thread—a simple length of white thread. Simon Mallot held it in in his hand, and Clyde saw that the skein rose above his head. The other end was attached to something on top of the table.

What was it?

The answer came. Mallot tugged on the end of the white thread. And from above, with a hurtling crash, dropped—the bottle containing the growth reduction antidote!

It dropped past Clyde's head and fell with a shattering thump.

But it did not break.

Mallot looked up at his enemy as Clyde clung to the rung of the chair. Then he grinned. Carefully he stooped and untied the thread from around the vial.

Clyde panted as he turned to continue his descent. He had to reach the floor and find the needle before Simon Mallot realized one was there.

He knew Mallot had another scheme, but he didn't dare stop to gaze. A few more movements and he'd reach the floor. He climbed on——

Then it happened.

The white noose coiled out, sailed in an arc around Clyde's shining head, and dropped in a hangman's knot around his neck.

CLYDE'S hands rose to tear at the rope—for that was what the thread amounted to.

As he released his hold, he fell. And the rope tightened, the wizard tugged, Clyde felt the red haze rise around him as he gasped for breath.

Floundering helplessly, Clyde saw Simon Mallot run towards him with a grin of evil triumphant. In one brawny hand he held the glittering needle. The wizard had found it, then!

This was the end. Bruised, battered, a strangling victim of the sorcerer's cunning, Clyde stared up at the descending point of the needle.

Simon Mallot's white face loomed. The eyes flamed, the red lips parted. And the silver death slashed towards Clyde's breast.

The growl rose with startling swiftness. The deep, purring moan of menace caused both wizard and victim to turn their heads.

It was the black cat. It had slipped into the room quite stealthily — but stealth turned to lightning speed.

All in an instant Mallot turned, stared at the great black body before him, then shrieked and tried to dodge.

But the razored claw raked out, the sleek head bent forward.

One dreadful, gurgling scream—one indescribable gulping sound—and then the black beast was slinking from the room.

Clyde stared, then looked away. A tiny leg dangled limply from the black cat's jaws . . . like the paw of a white mouse . . .

CHAPTER IX

A Sizeable Problem

THE noose was gone from Clyde's neck. Gwen, shaken but smiling, had joined him on the floor. Now, together again, they tugged at the end of the needle. Its point was imbedded in the cork stopper of the vial.

"Once more," Clyde urged. "We'll yank it out."

They did. The cork gave, and the precious fluid flowed across the floor. Swiftly Clyde loosened the needle.

"Wonderful thing," he commented grimly. "A weapon, then a corkscrew, and now a hypodermic needle."

"Clyde." Gwen's eyes clouded.

"Yes, darling?"

"Aren't you afraid to use that stuff? After all, you don't know if it will work—and the needle is so big——"

Clyde smiled and shrugged.

"What else can I do?" he said. "It's a chance I must take." He dipped the needle point in the pool of fluid on the floor.

"Oh, Clyde!"

She ran to him then, and they clung together—two grotesque tiny little figures, ragged and bruised and infinitesmal.

But there was reality in their embrace—perhaps the last reality in a fantastic world.

"All right, darling," Clyde whispered. He stepped back. One hand held the needle forward, tipped the point in. He placed his arm against the point, forced it down. The point was wet.

A trickle of crimson—a groan——

Clyde fell. But even as he fell, he felt himself shoot upwards.

This time there was no drowning sensation; only a surprising feeling of *expansion*. It was as though he flew upwards instead of dropping — as though he soared to meet the room about him.

And then he was standing on his feet once more, standing and leaning against the laboratory table.

But he was alive again—alive, and fully-grown to his natural size!

The rest was easy.

The requirements of modesty were easily fulfilled with the aid of the wizard's discarded garments. And then Clyde was cradling the tiny figure of Gwen between his fingers, pressing the needle gently home——

Within a few moments a normal girl lay in his arms.

There was another embrace. An embrace, this time, of joyous reunion in a properly proportioned world.

"Hey—what about me?"

Clyde whirled.

"It's Roger!" he grinned. "We almost forgot about him."

Stepping to the table, Clyde untied the child. The gauze knots were no problem to his fingers now.

"Thanks," said the boy.

"Save it," Clyde advised. "Let's get our things and get out of here. Gwen, slip on Mallot's robe. My own clothes must be downstairs."

"What about the butler?" Gwen asked.

"Mallot sent him out for the day," Roger informed her. "After all, it's Christmas."

"So it is," Clyde grinned. "Though I'd hardly say we've had much of a holiday."

HE TURNED and guided Gwen out of the laboratory. Roger lingered behind the doors for a moment, then joined them on the stairway.

In the hall, Clyde dressed once more. Gwen wrapped the robe around her, a smile on her doll-like cheeks. Suddenly her pert nose wrinkled.

"Don't I smell smoke?" she asked.

Roger nodded. "Yes," he whispered. "I—I started a fire in the laboratory upstairs. Such things should be destroyed."

Clyde looked at the boy, but there was wisdom beyond youth in his eyes.

He nodded. "Yes," he agreed. "Perhaps it's for the best."

He bent his red head down as Gwen whispered in his ear. The girl pointed at Roger and smiled.

"What are you whispering about?" the boy demanded.

Clyde smiled. "Nothing much," he declared. "It's just that we're going to be married, and Gwen suggested that she'd like to adopt you as our boy."

Roger glowed and shuffled his feet. "Good enough," he agreed, as they left the house.

Gwen sighed. "Of course it's going to be an awful job to change some of those weird ideas Mallot has given you. But we'll bring you up properly."

"Bet we will," said Clyde grimly. He grasped Roger's arm grimly. "The first step in your education starts now," he told the boy. He glanced at the smoke pouring from the roof of the house behind them.

"I'll have to teach you not to play with matches," he muttered.

"What are you going to do?" Gwen cried.

Clyde grinned as he slowly bent the boy forward in an ageless gesture. "Nothing at all," he said. "Nothing at all. I'm just going to give the kid a good, old fashioned spanking!"

COMING IN THE MAY ISSUE

Here it is at last, you super-scientific detective fans! A REAL Interplanetary Mystery! 50,000 words—not only a scientific detective story, but a sensational science fiction story as well! As GREAT as "Empire Of Jegga"—and by the SAME author! It's

"MURDER IN SPACE"

By David V. Reed

For Crying Out Loud, Don't Miss the May Issue!

JAPS HUNT QUININE SUBSTITUTE

THE Japanese, who now have a corner on the world's supply of quinine, the most effective drug in the treatment of malaria, are reported to be hunting high and low for a passable substitute. They disclosed this themselves in numerous recent propaganda broadcasts in which they also announced that they had already "discovered" one or two obviously unsatisfactory substitutes.

These announcements are accepted in official Dutch quarters as evidence that the Japanese are seriously considering the possibility that they may be driven out of Java. In fact, no other interpretation could be placed upon the reports, for in peace time Java, the most important of the East Indies islands, provided 95 per cent of the world's requirements of quinine.

Thus it is inconceivable that Java's natural supplies would be insufficient to meet the needs of the Japanese and Indonesians, despite malaria epidemics reported in the Archipelago. This is particularly true since the Tokyo radio claimed as recently as September 28 that quinine production at Bandung had risen to 172 per cent of the pre-invasion output.

In malaria the Japanese officials and soldiers stationed on the conquered Dutch islands have met an enemy they fear as much as dive-bombers or tanks, and rightly so. Since they occupied the Archipelago, the disease has increased alarmingly; it now rages through like a scourge from the northern tip of Sumatra to the Japanese-occupied portion of Dutch New Guinea, hitting the populations of Java, Borneo, Celebes and other islands. Especially in Celebes the Japanese have been battling against the tropical disease with all their might—mainly because their own armies are badly affected by it. Here they evolved a system of sending malaria prevention squads, led by three Japanese officials wth three Indonesian assistants, throughout the island to investigate the spread of the disease. But only a short time after the Tokyo radio informed the world of this method, Japanese official sources admitted that other ways of combatting malaria would have to be found.

Recently the Japanese proclaimed excitedly they had at last found a remedy: Dr. T. J. Naingoolan of Medan, Sumatra, had "discovered a medicine concocted from a plant named Cassia Mata, which is found abundantly in Sumatra and supplies a perfect quinine substitute." But shortly thereafter the Nipponese radio told of a "new" and rather peculiar weapon for fighting malaria—a tiny fish which is extremely fond of mosquito eggs. The Japanese proposed breeding an immense number of these fish and turning them loose in mosquito-infested lakes and swamps; their experts claimed this method would wipe malaria out of all the territory under their command.

But meantime, no matter the proportions malaria epidemics may have attained in the Netherlands East Indies, the Japanese—with Java's great reservoir of quinine in their possession—must have some special reason for seeking a substitute. Netherlands authorities are convinced the reason is Japanese fear of losing Java. Dr. Charles O. van der Plas, Chief Commissioner of the Netherlands East Indies, now stationed in Australia, hit the nail on the head with this remark: "If the Japanese are looking for a quinine substitute it's a sure sign they don't feel at ease. They must have a definite premonition that pretty soon they will be thrown out of their present holdings."

AN UNTOUCHED SOURCE OF RUBBER

ALTHOUGH many people are unaware of the fact, the sunflower can be a very useful and important product in our war-time economy. Recent researches have proven that certain extracts from the sunflower can provide tires for our cars, cooking oils, shortening, vitamins, and even soap. But, unfortunately, this source of rubber and other vital products has been sadly and entirely neglected. Although the sunflower is capable of providing many essential products, the significant fact to consider is the possibility of obtaining rubber to supplement our dwindling supply of this precious war material.

Sunflowers can produce rubber after four months of growth! In fact, the leaves richest in this rubber product must be harvested four months after planting or else the finest results will not be obtained. Thus it is possible to raise two crops on the same ground in some parts of the United States.

Whereas we have deprived this plant of its rightful place in our economy, Russia has not. The Russians have used and developed the sunflower to aid in the prosecution of their war against the Nazis to a considerable extent. Many people think that our present shortage of rubber, which has unquestionably impeded our war program, could have been avoided if the people of this nation would have had enough foresight to utilize the source of rubber inherent in the sunflower. Of course, after the farmer has grown the plant, it is up to the chemist to convert the flower into useful and valuable rubber. Maybe the day is not far off when most of our rubber items will consist mainly of the rubber extracted from the sunflower.

Magnetic Miss METEOR

By DON WILCOX

This beautiful, heartless woman held a planet in slavery. How could a revolt prevail against her magic?

IF YOU'VE ever been up to your ears in a rebellion you know that the toughest part of the job is to keep the secret. There's a right time for a plot to spring. Up to that split second you'e got to be as dumb and innocent as a clam.

I was clammy for months before the day, on the planet of Venus, that I thought we'd surely touch off the fireworks. I'd lived the double life—a mild and obedient assistant to a mild and faithful young executive. I, Adam Alonzo Briff, drew my pay coupons each week, earth time, by t e n d i n g strictly to business, and my immediate superior, Jay Lathrop, likewise received his steady income for obedient service. To whom? To the lady who was the boss of this one and only Venus outpost

Together Jay Lathrop and I, along with scores of other rebels, wore our well polished mask of allegience whenever we paraded in front of the leader we hoped to push into a fiery furnace.

Take my word for it, Violet Speer, in spite of her name, was no shy little violet. She was a dyed-in-the-wool villainess.

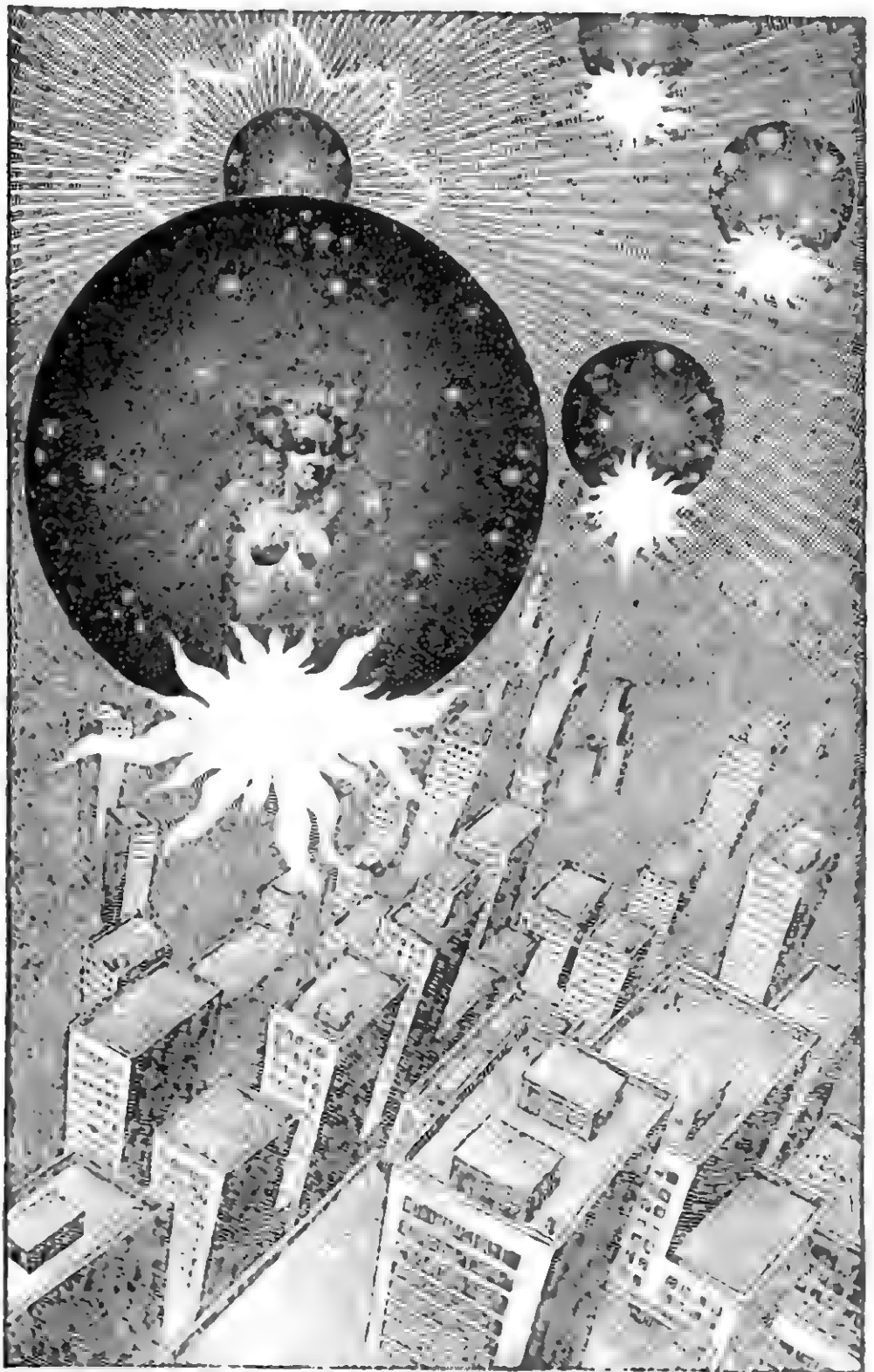
Consider, for instance, what happened that momentous night, Friday the 13th, earth time. I was standing on a stone step of this somewhat ancient market building on this oppressive Friday afternoon, receiving instructions from Jay Lathrop. It was a normally hot day. If there's an easy way to escape the oppressive heat of Venus without wallowing in the swamps with the poisonous rajlouts, I don't know what it is.

I was listening to Lathrop's instructions for one of the wrecking crews, and he was pacing the old stone sidewalk with an energetic click of his polished black boots, when up the sidewalk came a uniformed guard bearing an order from Violet Speer.

"Lend a hand," he said. "We've lost Mr. Grailford. He's wanted for a special purpose."

"What purpose?" asked Jay Lathrop, squinting skeptically and passing his fingers through his bristling sandy hair.

Guards are known to be peculiarly expressionless. They take for granted that their red and silver uniforms carry an overpowering prestige, and woe unto anyone who gives them any defiance. This guard repeated, as cold as ice, "Lend a hand, men. Grailford is wanted."



In the depths of the crystal globe appeared the lovely face of Princess Aura

We went obediently, and I think Lathrop was glad enough to postpone his day's work. This particular market building, in line for his wrecking crew, was much too beautiful to destroy. Lathrop was bitter over such duties. He had a soft heart for their fine works of architecture.

This building was dated 2004, which meant that it was one of the first of the American colony buildings of the twenty-first century Venus expedition. Now, four and a quarter centuries later, these fine structures were being crushed and rolled down into the dust and swamps of the Earth's sister planet.

We marched off with the guard, and our wrecking crew also came to lend a hand. Whether we liked it or not we found the lost Mr. Grailford presently, hiding in the building beyond the old market.

HE WAS a pitiful sight, ill and half starved and scared. The guards slapped him down, then commanded him to come to his feet and march. I happened to know that Grailford had grown too sick to work and consequently had hidden out. For Miss Violet Speer and her red and silver guards were slave drivers in the worst sense of the term.

"A change of climate for Mr. Grailford," was the order.

A change of climate was frequently ordered for workers who were run down—workers who needed the cooler and more healthful air on the other side of the first mountain range. The strange fact was, however, that *no one who went over for this change ever came back.*

"This bear is going over the mountain," Jay Lathrop whispered to me, "to see what he can see."

And three of us followed, on this Friday night.

Without any beasts of burden or vehicles we gingerly held the pace up the long trail, through the semi-darkness into the mountainous region. We kept a mile's distance between us and the guards. At length we could see that the party had stopped and made a fire. By its light we could see Mr. Grailford bending under the blows of the whips. He was digging. They were forcing him to dig his own grave.

We came within thirty or forty yards of the scene in time to see the last blow of the guard's whip strike him down. He fell into his own grave. He screamed for mercy, but the men threw stones in upon him and covered him up.

That explained many things to us—things best pondered in silence. We had no heart to return to the post and resume our jobs. So this was how men were treated as soon as their efficiency decreased and it was no longer profitable for Violet Speer to feed them.

We had long suspected this. Now we knew, and the rumor would spread through the two thousand workers like angry lightning through the sky

We were rebels now, as never before. Grailford's fate would be ours, too, eventually, unless the two thousand of us acted together.

The third member of our trio that night was a newcomer who had recently landed on the planet of Venus in a ship of his own. He had come expecting to find this landing (a dot on all interplanetary maps) to be a hospitable haven. At once an accident had happened to his space ship.

One of the hanging meteors had rolled into it, crushing it to matchwood.

We had not told him at once what that meant But he was advised officially by Miss Violet Speer to get to work if he wished to earn his passage back to the Earth. He was a friendly little fellow, Midget Jupiter by name.

"You can call me Midge," he would say pleasantly, "but don't forget that my last name is Jupiter."

Midge didn't understand these whisperings of revolution at first, but we had promised him he would before he'd lived here very long.

"And another thing I don't understand," Midge said, "This Violet Speer, who you say is the big boss, told me she wanted me to be one of her head executives. But why did she put me to work with a pick and sledge?"

"Did she actually talk with you?"

"Oh, we had a very pleasant chat. She's beautiful, and her gold ornaments and diamonds nearly knocked my eyes out. She was smiling and bowing pleasantly and wearing a beautiful gown—"

"And so you thought she was a wonderful person . . . which may be true," Lathrop said, "until she decides you need a change of climate"

"Yeah," Midge growled uncomfortably "Why do we men let things like that happen?"

"That's just what I wanted you to say, Midge Jupiter," said Lathrop. "We haven't made this trip to the mountains in vain. From now on you're in on the movement. We'll tell you all about it on the way back."

CHAPTER II

Hanging Meteoroids

SO WE started back through the semi-darkness of the Venus night, talking of the trouble that was spread before us. And we gave Midge the background of what had happened here.

We knew this much of the deep past: Four hundred years ago the explorers from the Earth had come several hundred strong and succeeded in establishing an American settlement. These early Venus colonists had endured their share of pioneer hardships. However, they had had one big advantage over the pathfinders of some planets. They had not been opposed by any native creatures intelligent enough to challenge their right to this new land. The highest animals had been found to be rajlouts—denizens of the swamps. The rajlouts—as large as chimpanzees and as curious as penguins, had watched from their swamps while the civilized men built a well-planned space outpost here.

The best of architects had come, during the twenty-first century, and built a great number of fine stone buildings. An excellent quality of building stone had gone into these architectural masterpieces, and they still stood as solid as Gibraltar. It was a shame to tear them down.

"But why?" Midge protested. "Why tear them down?"

"Different people have different conceptions," said Jay Lathrop, "of what a civilization should be. Those first Venus colonists intended that Venus should be, first of all, a traveler's haven, a place of peace, an outpost that would serve the coming commerce of the solar system. But most of those colonists or their descendants moved on during the last century or two. They left enough people to hold it, they thought. But you see what has happened. This daring young female conqueror who calls herself Violet Speer, cruised down across these mountains a few Earth years ago and announced that she was to be known henceforth as the Ruler of Venus."

"How could she get away with that?"

"She had beauty and intelligence, as you have already observed," said Jay Lathrop. "She had the most obedient army of guards I ever saw. In brief, she possessed everything she needed to persuade people to do her will. Most

important of all was this single ship, the massive space liner in whose shadow we work. She lives in it, elevated a mile above us, and from this high throne she rules us."

Midge conceded that this was a most remarkable arrangement. Not the least curious feature of this organization of ruling power was the fact that the ship had a seemingly magical faculty for gathering unto itself a cluster of meteoroids.

"You mean those huge balls of stone?" Midge asked. "I've been puzzling over those from the day I arrived. What holds them up?"

"Some secret gravitational forces on the ship itself," Lathrop explained.

Since neither of us had ever been aboard this great liner that rested in the air a mile above us, we could only speculate as to who might have invented ways for it to gather these meteoroids on its flight through the skies. But the obvious fact was that the meteoroids hung there, a dozen or more of them—great spheres of stone weighing many tons each, as large as cathedral domes. There were no inside cables to keep them from falling on us. But some strange magnetic lines of force did hold them, as if both drawing and repelling them at once.

"When the ship cruises away, the hanging meteoroids go with it. Violet Speer is aware that they might have a real protective value in case of trouble."

ON another such excursion into the mountains a few days later the three of us had another opportunity to talk over our situation. Midge was right with us in spirit. His eyes were wide open to the challenge that was ushering in our revolution silently, stealthily.

"What happened," he asked, "to those people who were left from the earlier colony. Where are they now?"

"Some of the children of the original Venus colonists moved on to establish outposts on other planets. But a scattered few are still here in our neighborhood. Look across the valley. Do you see those tiny blue lights, little pinpoints against the mountain-sides? Those are the little huts. They've moved away from the port to keep out of *her* reach . . . but they are never out of danger."

"And all of you?" Midge asked. "How did you get into this?"

I, for one, blushed to remember how gullible I had been.

"We came in answer to her call," said Lathrop. "She picked us up on the Earth. We left to come to a new land of opportunity. It sounded beautiful in her sales talk. If you've ever happened to be around Buffalo or Chicago when she swooped down with her big space boat, you'd know. There were items in the paper about it at the time, too. They all took for granted that Violet Speer was a great leader."

"And who is she? Where did she come from?"

"Maybe the Earth, maybe Mars, maybe the American Colony on Venus. No one knows. Maybe from an outside world."

We trudged along. There were some electric lanterns coming now, and so we hid ourselves and waited. For tonight there was to be another burial, and the victim was to be old man Kandaroff.

CHAPTER III

Rumors of Deadly Rajlouts

"WHAT bright, burning eyes the old man has," Jay whispered, as the guards and their victim paraded past our hiding place. "Those four

guards think they've got it easy with the old fellow."

"Guards! Guards!" I muttered disgustedly. "The walking forms of men with ray-guns for souls—that's what they are."

"Are we going to jump 'em?" Midge asked. "It's our necks if we muff the job."

"We'll never win our revolution letting them live," said Jay Lathrop. "They're virtually automatons of allegiance, for some strange reason. So—here goes. You two men follow them closely, and I'll run ahead."

The plan was simple, quick, and none too safe. But worth a try.

Lathrop disappeared in the darkness, running silently. Midge and I followed the shine of the electric lanterns as the guards trudged along their familiar path. In a matter of an hour the party came to a halt, and we could see they were examining some tracks that crossed their path.

"Where'd this barricade of stones come from?" one of the guards was saying. "Who put it there?"

"The rajlouts must be moving up from the swamp," said a second guard. "They have a way of banking their paths with stones."

"But look at these foot tracks. A man's bare feet. Some human has had a hand in this."

They passed the lights back and forth over the low stumbling blocks of stone which Lathrop had hastily piled in two parallel rows squarely across their path. They were mystified. Could there be rajlouts with the feet and the toes of men? Violet Speer should have the valley swamps explored for signs of enemies.

Two of them went on with old man Kandaroff and the other two kept on working with their lights. "Come on," one of the guards called back. "We can play around after our job is done."

But the two laggers decided the least they could do was to measure the tracks and take a report back to Violet Speer. So they bent down to compare measurements.

In that moment we were upon them. We swiftly, cold-heartedly, almost silently, gave it to them. We pounded down with stones and smashed skulls to pulp.

We dragged the dead bodies to one side. We took the guns and the guards' red coats, silver belts, and the lights. Equipped with these, Lathrop and I marched forward. Midge followed at a safe distance. He had been a bystander through this action. He cooperated in silence.

Lathrop and I moved up to overtake the rest of the party. Old man Kandaroff cried out in surprise and jumped to one side. The remaining guards were quick to fall under the blasts of our newly won guns.

That was all. The job was done. The next party that might come across the mountain would find a warning in the form of four dead compatriots.

We took all four guns, we made a pack cot for the elderly Kandaroff and bore him back toward home. He was the most grateful man in the world.

We hid him in a cave and did everything we could in a clandestine way to make life comfortable for him.

Right away there was a search party of guards who went out to look for their missing brothers. They not only found the bodies. They found the human foot tracks which Lathrop had taken pains to leave imprinted in the mud. They noted the missing guns. They returned with news that must have been disturbing to Miss Violet Speer. She called an assembly of all people who professed to be her loyal

subjects and made the boast that all traitors would be sought out and buried alive.

She was quite a beautiful person, and I was aware that my new friend Midge Jupiter was not the only person among the assembly who caught his breath when she appeared and sighed when she departed.

Even Jay Lathrop was noticeably affected on these rare occasions when she made her public appearances.

SHE did not actually come down from her ship and walk among us—though she should have been safe enough, with five hundred armed carmine coats to protect her.

No, her appearance was through the medium of a great globe—an artificial meteoroid which hung suspended by the mysterious magnetic forces like the others. It contained a screen which mirrored her by television. In this guise she appeared to us, dressed in the loveliest of purple and white gowns, with jewels aglitter. Everyone hushed as if here was something too beautiful to be realized.

Even when Violet Speer made a speech she kept her distance. That was her way. She preferred to use a television screen that would magnify her before the eyes of her audience.

This device spared her the annoyance of rubbing elbows with her people. She could keep her distance. Popular feeling being what it was, this was the safer thing to do. The low mumblings of hatred from these enslaved employees could not reach her. She could not see the deep hatreds that burned in the eyes of men whose comrades had been tortured and buried alive.

But upon this occasion Violet Speer quickly silenced her audience There were signs of a mysterious danger in the land. The people listened intently.

"My dear subjects! If there is a dangerous breed of rajlouts moving in upon us, I have the means to destroy them. My great ship carries the facilities for wholesale destruction. So do not fear. But let me warn you. If any of you learn of the presence of these creatures and do not report them, you will be held guilty of a crime against our common safety."

It was at this point that Violet Speer became most emphatic. There was dynamite in her threat.

"I promise you that every such offender will die a horrible death. So beware! Do not let yourselves be found in the company of this mysterious breed of poison rajlouts."

The audience was pretty well tamed by this speech. It was a clever stroke. Violet Speer wasn't talking about any swamp-dwelling rajlouts. What she really had in mind would dawn upon everyone sooner or later.

But for the remainder of that twilight the people returning to their homes preferred to talk in low voices. Some were angry, some were afraid, many were puzzled. Could such a tyrant as Violet Speer become a fairy godmother of protection overnight?

"I don't get her angle," said Midge Jupiter. "What does she get out of all this?"

"Some people have a hankering to own a big industry, some a whole nation, some a continent," said Jay Lathrop. "All this pretty little lady wants is to get a good solid choke-hold on a planet. The first great wave of pioneers has gone on. But there's enormous business ahead: space travel, military outposts, permanent settlers. I think Violet Speer would be satisfied with a complete monopoly."

"It's my opinion," I said, "that this woman has an insane passion for some-

thing called power. And her way of achieving it is through destroying. She may have plans that go beyond Venus."

"She may," said Midge, "intend to take in the Earth eventually."

"She's got a long way to go," Jay Lathrop laughed. He brought our idle speculations back to the practical and immediate. "She'd better not command me to destroy that old government building. Of all the beautiful architecture! Maybe it doesn't match the Taj Mahal or the finest cathedrals, but still it's one of the world's architectural treasures. And she'll sacrifice it because it stands in her way."

"She's trying to erase everything the early colonists planted here," I said, "to strengthen her own claim."

As a newcomer, Midget Jupiter was brimful of curiosity on all the whys and wherefores. A soft mist had crept up from the swamps. In the dimly lighted doorways and porches of the ancient stone buildings many little groups were passing the night as we were—talking, wondering, trying to cut into the thick mists of the future to know what meaning life might hold for them here on Venus.

Midge uncorked another question.

"Where'd she ever get such a terrific space ship?"

CHAPTER IV

A Girl on the Trail

"THAT," said Jay, "is as much a mystery as where it got her. Apparently it was Earth-built. But it contains an amazing secret process for gathering a quantity of little meteoroids out of space. Somehow those masses come, hundreds of tons of them, as if to a magnet. And yet they don't make contact. There is always that zone of safety. They move along with the ship and yet keep their distance—a hundred yards or so from the ship's surface."

At present there were about twenty of these rounded stony bodies hanging in the air beneath the ship, as if suspended by invisible cables. The ship itself was at least a mile and a half long. It was, to all appearances, a great bar magnet, capable of drawing these stray little heavenly bodies and for keeping them at safe arm's length.

When the ship was at rest in the air, as at present, half a mile above the flat space port, the meteoroids clustered around, occasionally sounding off with a low grinding or a crash of thunder when they bumped. Floating balls of dead weight, they might serve as buffers for the ship's protection. Or, as Violet Speer had so ominously suggested, they might be used as instruments of destruction.

The big orange-colored ship was said to contain a crew of only forty-five men. In the very near future I had occasion to verify this fact.

In the whisperings of that night following Violet Speer's speech the topic of revolution was not neglected. Lathrop knew, and so did I, that her allusion to a dangerous breed of rajlouts was intended as a thrust at rebel organizers. From her vantage point high above us Violet Speer was keeping watch.

The plan of revolution was known to the inner circle only, and that was a pretty small circle in a population of two thousand workers. There would be about five hundred guards with standard ray-guns who would have to be overcome.

We had watched repeatedly—we of the inner circle of twenty-five—we had watched and sifted these guards looking for some key man through whom we might get arms. But every man of those five hundred stood as solid for

his boss as a fallen meteor.

That in itself was very surprising. When Midge said, "What kind of dope does she give them to make them that way?" we laughed. But he was hitting pretty close, as we afterward learned.

And when he said, "Are you aiming to slaughter the whole bunch?" we had to stop and philosophize over the matter It's always a question, when there's a cruel but necessary surgical operation to be performed, whether any innocent flesh is going to get hurt. It's a tough nut to crack when you stop to consider that some of your enemy are persons who by their own bad fortune fell in with the wrong side. It's a hard decision to say that they have to be bumped off right along with the sinners. But when we talked it over in a dark council meeting a few nights later, Jay Lathrop offered an opinion that stuck:

"If your leader is so evil that his poison saturates the persons around him, it's too bad for them. Maybe they didn't want it that way. But after it's happened they're lost. They can't be redeemed. They're stumbling blocks to the justice that every honest man fights for. Gentlemen, we're going to have to kill, capture, or beat into submission exactly five hundred guards."

Midge Jupiter said pessimistically, "That oughta be easy. Five hundred of them and two thousand of us—the only thing being that they have the guns."

"Our weapons," said Lathrop, "are our tools—picks, shovels, mauls. They reach no farther than the swing of your arm. Their ray-guns are good for exactly a hundred yards. Did you ever run a hundred yards for a touchdown, Midge? That's how far you'd have to run to miss the sweep of an atomic gun."

OLD man Kandaroff went over our plans with us; said he thought we were in for plenty of difficulty.

"To mount that ship when she sits up there a half mile in the air isn't easy. How can you get there in the first place? And when you do, what's to prevent the guards from turning you into a wisp of smoke with a gun before you ever get on board?"

"But if we do get on board?" said Lathrop.

"Once you're there, the guns wouldn't go into action so fast. A clear shot inside a ship isn't easy. I've seen those guns work. I well remember one quick flash I saw. The target was a man, and suddenly his left side just wasn't there. But that wasn't all. The end of the table behind him wasn't there. And the wall behind it opened up, and a tree beyond that came bouncing down, and a metal signboard caved in and three fence-posts melted away. Everything that lay in the hundred-yard path disintegrated in a twinkling."

This talk was followed by other accounts of the efficiency of ray-guns. We tried to content ourselves that they were positively too destructive to be used on a space ship. But we couldn't grow comfortable about that. In any event we bade fair to be on the receiving end. When the meeting was over I heard my name called. Kandaroff had something to tell me.

"See here, Briff, you've done a fine job of keeping me supplied with food. But I suggest you let me starve for a while."

His words scared me. My first thought was that Violet Speer had got our number.

"Not yet," Kandaroff. "But that's what I'm afraid of. We've been watched. Some young girl has picked up the trail to my cave. I saw her watching you yesterday as you went

back down the mountain path."

"Over that trail?" I asked. "She must be a bear for punishment. Or a mountain goat—"

"A deer would be a more appropriate figure," said Kandaroff. "I think you'd better turn hunter on your next trip to make sure she isn't a spy. If necessary I can go to a new hideout."

"Sooner or later," said Lathrop, "your executioner will find out you're still alive."

"The later the better," said Kandaroff. "I want to stay alive. I want to see this revolution through."

No one would doubt it, in view of the fierce burning of his eyes. Someone stirred the low embers of the fire, and a few of us carried on. Among us we came to the conclusion that the girl in question must have been a descendant of one of the early Venus colonists. She lived with her parents in a shack about a mile off the brown brick road.

"Then she won't be a spy," said Kandaroff confidently. "These early colonists don't like this Miss Violet Speer's rule any better than we do."

"Anyway I'll keep a lookout," I said. "How old a girl?"

"Eighteen or nineteen."

"I'll help you keep a lookout, Briff," said Midge Jupiter.

CHAPTER V

Mountain Secrets

A FEW days later I got acquainted with this girl. She was eighteen, blonde, pretty and amiable. She was an American, of the stock that colonized this planet three and four hundred years ago. You could tell—the very regular features, the archaic accents reminiscent of the old twenty-first century movies, a physical hardihood characteristic of the pioneers. Her education was negligible, her interests limited. Her conceptions of the immensity of the world and its affairs were pitifully behind the times. Ideas about time and space had advanced to new levels of complexity since her ancestors struck out on their great pioneering adventure.

However, when it came to such fundamental matters as honesty and fair play and cooperation with one's fellowmen, this pretty little girl seemed to be very much up to date. She and her family were generous and hospitable. I should know: the very hour that I met her found me on the way to her home.

It began with our mountainside conversation. I had turned suddenly to see her bob down behind a boulder. When she peeked around I was there looking down at her.

"Why are you following me?" I asked.

"To see where you take the food."

"I have a place to take it," I said. "There is a hungry mouth in the mountains that needs to be fed."

She showed an inclination to be superstitious about this. "A hungry mouth in the mountains." She looked in awe toward the great purple-shadowed craggy slopes. Then she turned to me, laughing. "You are joking. The mountains do not eat food."

"The mountains are full of secrets," I said. "Why do parents think I come to these foothills with food? Have you told them?"

"My parents say you must have someone in hiding. But I'll tell them you said there was a mouth in the mountains." She smiled at me quizzically to know whether she was on the right track.

I was at once worried over how far this rumor of a fugitive might have travelled. But the girl assured me, in

my own words, that the mountains were full of secrets.

She suggested, then, that I might accompany her to her house and talk with her parents, and I accepted gladly.

Midge would have been jealous of my good fortune. These homes of the remaining families of Venus colonizers were apart from the city which Violet Speer was making over. We who had been brought in during the decade were usually kept too busy to make friends. Still more to the point of my good fortune, this young girl, Ellen by name, was as charming and pretty as a mountain flower.

We ascended the steps of a porch that was supported by stilts, and there Ellen's parents sat, apparently passing the long day by gazing down at the swampy lakes, across to the old city, and up at the mammoth space ship overhead.

We chatted in a very leisurely manner. They were willing to talk about their ancestors who pioneered here, about the old buildings that were being torn down for a wider space port and a more up-to-date city around it. But upon the burning subject of Miss Violet Speer they would say nothing.

They watched me suspiciously, and I wondered if they thought I was a spy from our tyrannical ruler.

What a strange household! These people seemed to have hidden themselves away in the hills for generations. They hardly realized that the achievements of their ancestors were buried under the dust of time.

A TROPHY that interested me was an ancient three-bladed rotor on the wall. It was a model that I judged had come down the second half of the twentieth century, from the long outmoded heliocopters which people used to jump from roof to roof. In their day they had been the latest and most convenient mode of short individual hops, as from home to the other side of the city or even down town for the groceries. There had been a day when the owners of such vehicles had been the new aristocracy. The forerunners of a more advanced technological age. And that was no doubt the reason that family pride had preserved this relic.

How curious that these people should have grown so provincial! The spirit of adventure had brought their forefathers to this far-off outpost ahead of the sluggish spread of civilization. Far ahead of the mass of emigrants they had come. Now, with the passing generations, the families had lapsed into a society of stragglers, bound down with a burden of museum pieces from the past, helicopter rotors!

One could see in their fine, intelligent features the capacity for taking their place with the ranks of the moderns. Circumstances had done this to them.

When I bade the girl and her family good afternoon I promised to come to see them again. Here were friends who could be trusted completely. It was then, as Ellen walked with me out toward the brown brick roadway, that I stated my confidence: It was no dragon's mouth or monster that I fed; it was indeed a man who was hiding—hiding because the cruel Violet Speer had meant to kill him.

"And why?"

"Because she thinks he is too old to be a good worker. She does not appreciate his years of hard effort."

"I wish," said Ellen, "that someone would send her and her ship to another world."

"You mustn't think such thoughts aloud," I warned.

"But all of my people think such thoughts. My father has said that he would gladly fight the red and silver

guards who ride up and down from her ship."

"Promise that you will tell no one what we have talked about."

"I promise—and you must promise that no guard will catch you befriending this man who is hiding."

With these vows we parted company.

The following day, and the next and the next, we met and talked again. To me it became a double pleasure to do this errand—the pleasure of my talks with Kandaroff, wise old man that he was, and the enjoyment of my visit with this simple girl and her rough and hardy parents.

One night I said to her, "Ellen, will you go with me tonight, and I will show you where this man lives, so that you may take food to him until I come back again. I may be gone for a long time."

So she and her father accompanied me and promised to take Kandaroff into their home during my absence.

I could not explain how or why I would not be leaving. I only knew that Jay Lathrop had heard a rumor. There would be a change of climate for the two of us very soon.

CHAPTER VI

Ray-Gunning for Sport?

THE red and silver guards marched up to us in their formal manner and requested us to accompany them. We obeyed on the instant. They led us out across the space port plaza. Midget Jupiter kept trailing along with us, asking where we were going.

"What does this mean? Hey, what's the idea? Will you be sure to come back?"

"He's a pest. Let's give him a real change of climate," one of the guards barked. They snapped an order at him and were about to turn him over to another set of guards when the enlarged image and the amplified voice of Violet Speer set forth a command. The suddenness of her voice alarmed the people in the streets like a fire siren.

"We may need another man. Bring him along. There will be some deck scrubbing to do, and it will be amusing to use that little short man for a mop."

"I may not be much more than a midget," Midge said under his breath, "but she'd better not forget that I'm a Jupiter too."

So he came, right by our side, and the next thing we know we were on the half-mile high elevator, gasping for breath as the cage went sailing up and up. Around us were the great spheres of stone hanging motionless in the air. Above us was the huge orange hull of the space ship.

The aperture spread black and ominous, to engulf us and our elevator car. A few minutes later we found ourselves in a mammoth parlor high in the sky, looking out at the steamy clouds that brushed past our big ship's nose.

"You are my guests for some days to come, gentlemen," came the voice of the lady of this great ship. A television screen was, as usual, her means of appearing before us. "I welcome you as fellow passengers on a long journey."

"Long journey!" Midge groaned for our benefit. "Famous last words."

"A space trip," Lathrop whispered. "Don't get scared. Act natural."

"Under these conditions," said Midge, "there's nothing so natural as acting scared. What's she going to do?"

I had an idea she had taken us along for ballast and would drop us off when the time came, but for some reason Jay Lathrop was more hopeful. He preferred, at least, to be optimistic until he saw where the danger lay.

"In other words," I relayed my own interpretation to Midge, "Jay and I

aren't going to get nervous until they bump you off."

"Don't. Don't even say it for a joke," Midge whispered.

Lathrop talked to us in a low whisper for fear the very floors might have ears.

"I think I know why we've come. She's smelled a revolution cooking and she wants to know who the cooks are that are stirring it. It may cool down with us gone."

"For our good health," said Midge, "I hope it keeps stewing."

I must admit there was a certain aesthetic pleasure in being here, looking out on the big universe previous to our take-off, looking down on our port where our fellow creatures were struggling. One who hasn't experienced it can hardly appreciate the different way you suddenly feel about everything. You've been grubber of the soil, an industrious earthworm, up to this moment. All at once you find yourself a winged bird with the power to float in the air and study the world beneath you. Too much of this pleasure would be the undoing of a rebel. It puts so much clean distance between himself and the men down there who are getting whipped and led across to other climates.

VIOLET SPEER came in. She was the slickest dresser you ever saw. She must have had a corner on the world's finest jewels and most beautiful gowns. I don't think they could have been fashioned by any of the few artisans gathered at Venus. She was a person who could walk into the room and make all conversations stop off short. I had a dreadful fear that she might be able to kill revolutions as easy as conversations. I mean, here we were, all sworn rebels, and good ones as long as we were on the ground. But up here, with her smiling at us and talking in her quick-witted manner, we could almost believe we were her long-lost friends.

As to age, anyone's guess is good. She was as vivacious as a sixteen-year-old, as witty and wise as a grandmother, and as quick to seize an advantage as a spoiled child. She could have easily have been, from her appearance, twenty-five or forty. The more you watched her the more you weren't sure whether she was really beautiful, or young either. Once when she dropped the remark that this ship had been in the family one hundred and twenty years you had a weird feeling that she might, by some mysterious manner, be remembering back that long.

She sat down beside Jay Lathrop, and as soon as she had talked with the others of us just long enough to know we were practically speechless in her presence, she turned her attentions to him.

"If you'll come to the windows, Mr. Lathrop," she said, taking him by the hand, "you'll have a splendid view of the newest meteor. It came to us out of nowhere on our last trip out."

"I don't understand it at all," said Lathrop. "How do you account for it?"

Now they went on talking, and their backs were toward us. She was holding to Lathrop's arm, and I couldn't help thinking what a wonderful chance for us simply to do what was needed to be done then and there. Midge and I were carrying the small ray pistols we had once taken from guards.

We exchanged sharp glances. Maybe it was something that Lathrop said just then that stopped us. "It would be a long fall from here."

"Yes," said Miss Speer, "I've often thought how unfortunate it would be if anyone should accidentally shoot through this wall and it would melt away under atomic fire. The whole sys-

tem of gravitational control would collapse if any chambers in the walls were damaged."

"It isn't pleasant to contemplate," Lathrop said. "Isn't there some way that such a space ship wall could be made to resist gunfire?"

"These modern ray-guns play no favorites, you know. But I'll give your question my best thought, and maybe I'll turn out an answer."

"Then you yourself are an inventor?" Lathrop asked. Midge and I were all ears now.

"After a fashion," she smiled, as if being very modest over some great talent. "I turn my attention to such little matters as inventions just for pastime. A pleasant diversion, inventing."

"What have you found most diverting recently?" Lathrop asked.

With a pleased smile Violet Speer took up a pencil and notebook.

"Let me sketch one of my curious little theories. It is related to such things as walls and atomic gunfire. Here in a line are G, the gun; M, a man; and W, a space ship wall. The idea is, in brief, that one substance that might be treated to resist an attack of gunfire would be human material."

"Living persons?" asked Lathrop in astonishment. At the same time Midge and I began to back away. It didn't sound safe to be around a woman who would talk like that. There wasn't so much as a hint of sentimentality in her voice to lift the mood of any of her icy theory talk.

"A rather surprising theory, do you think, Mr. Lathrop?" she asked.

"Surprising isn't the word for it," said Jay Lathrop. "It's horrifying."

"Just as so many theories are until they get past the stage of experimentation."

"Have you already begun experimenting along these lines?"

"Oh, yes, it's an instructive way to while away one's time on a trip to another planet."

"Just what form does this experimenting take?"

"You're sure this won't bore you, Mr. Lathrop? Or you other gentlemen?" She turned to us, and it seemed to me she was gloating over our discomfort. Very deliberately she told us what this was all about, and we sat there trying to take it in. I began to feel all choked up.

As she explained it, the general idea was that living tissue could be adapted to endure lots of things, such as to resist diseases, to overcome much poison. It was within the realm of possibility that, if treated with certain substances, this same remarkable human body might even learn to resist atomic fire.

It was a weird thought, no less so when she stopped to catalogue some of the varied chemical preparations with which she and her assistants had already treated their subjects in the line of experiments.

Finally Lathrop said, "As I understand it, then, you've prepared five different types of chemical solutions which you have termed A, B, C, D and E; and you have bathed a number of persons in each, after which you've proceeded to shoot at them with ray-guns. But you haven't told us the results."

"If you're not too impatient," said Violet Speer, "I could give you a demonstration."

"No, no, no, thank you," said Lathrop.

"On you, Mr. Jupiter? Wouldn't you like to experience this ordeal for yourself all in the interests of science, of course?"

"You mean I'd take a bath in acid or something, and then you'd shoot a gun at me?"

Violet Speer gave a cruel laugh. "Mr. Jupiter seems a trifle nervous. We'll wait until he misbehaves before we give him a first-hand demonstration of this experiment."

CHAPTER VII

Over the Earth's Skyscrapers

WE TOOK off quietly sometime during that night, and from then on it would seem that we were in a permanent night. The sun was out there doing its best to fill the windows of one side of the ship with light, but it was a thin and sickly effort, coming through the vast sky of almost tangible darkness. With no atmosphere around us to diffuse the light, neither the sun nor the stars could do much to brighten our gloomy way.

Our routine of days and nights and mealtimes, however, was adhered to on a basis of Earth time. You've doubtless followed this custom in your own space travel. It makes for desirable regularity in the details of living. At the same time it admits of flexibility, giving you such added pleasures as come from ignoring the morning alarm clock, for example, and turning over for more sleep.

My sleep was nothing to brag about. I drifted into gloomy dreams and tossed about like a bouncing meteor. After a night of nightmares I tried to improve my day with a long nap, which turned into a series of daymares.

That evening we gathered on the observation deck where we could watch the half-lighted meteoroids flow along with us.

I fired an abrupt question at Violet Speer to re-open the matter of ray-gun mysteries.

"Tell me, Miss Spear, have you succeeded in equipping any people to live against this gunfire?"

"Unfortunately, Mr. Briff," said Violet Speer, casting a cool wink at the two guards sitting across from us, "those subjects that have been dipped in solutions A, B, C and D and then shot at did not live to tell what happened. As to solution E—well I'm not through experimenting."

"Oh," I said. I assumed from her manner that she was spinning a quick lie to taunt me.

"Perhaps later on this voyage," she continued, "you shall see. I always take a few extra guests along on these cruises to make sure we'll not lack for subjects."

I didn't sleep a wink that night. I did some lonely prowling around the ship—enough that the guards began to follow me. So I was forced back into my stateroom. Night and day, night and day, according to the clock, went along with very little visible change in the stellar scenery. The gradual shifting of positions among the closer planets was the all-consuming interest on the observation deck.

Soon the Earth loomed large and we were moving down upon the wide white foamy blankets of clouds that covered great patches of continent. Like Venus, the Earth had approached as a sphere of misty white; its clear-cut features that stand out boldly on every drawing-room globe were blankets under the opaque covering of atmosphere.

Our meteoroids were with us, and now they turned into glowing meteors. One could not be sure at what hour or elevation they first took on the soft glow of heat. The friction of passing through the light air was intensified, minute by minute. Soon our meteoric company had become a riot of light.

NO DOUBT many people on the Earth saw the cluster of brilliant

flashes, and the superstitious ones wondered whether so many falling stars did not portend a disaster. I was guessing along the same lines, and superstition had nothing to do with it.

A few of the meteors burned out. Others stayed lighted like steady candles, and as we crossed through the long zone of night they blazed a luminous path for us. Snow-covered mountaintops reared their brightened points toward us, with shadows falling away on one side and closing in from the other.

Sometimes a flaming meteor would jump away from our course and shoot off on a tangent of its own, ripping into the forest and burying its white-hot mass in a mountainside.

What a terrible weapon of destruction! For a moment I could imagine how a city might suffer under such a blow. But it was a magnificent show, and I kept wishing that Ellen were with me. If I ever got back I'd tell her—

At last! Here we were approaching a city, retarding our speed at such a rate that the sensation was almost sickening.

High over the tops of buildings in a skyscraper city we came to a stop.

It was not an invasion. The people of the Earth no longer thought of other planets with invasion terrors. With earth man's first acquaintance with life from the outside, that bogey had been blasted. Rather, the earth inhabitants had come to realize that visits from the far-off lands usually carried no implication of harm.

I knew this to be so, because I had been a student of the trends of such opinions. Indeed, it was to get further information along this line that I had originally fallen for Violet Speer's invitation to Venus.

As it had happened a few years ago when I myself was enticed away from the Earth, so it happened now.

That is, the meteors served to attract much attention. As they gently swayed, floating now at a level only fifty yards or so above the tallest skyscrapers, throngs gathered in the streets below. You could see curious people pointing up at them. Would they strike the buildings? Why didn't they fall?

It was apparent at once to the streetfuls of crowds that this line of meteors was being controlled from the massive ship a half mile above them. In my own day of seeing this from the earth, I remember; we had marvelled at the delicacy of the controls. What wonders —to maneuver these countless tons of stone safely over the aerials and smokestacks and flagpoles! Now it was just as uncanny to us on the ship who had watched the regularity of this control straight across the heavens.

But of all this spectacular array the most sensational item was the leading meteor. For it was *not* a meteor but an artificial one. Violet Speer evidently had had it made to order. Unlike the ten or twelve that followed it, still luminous with sprays of fire, this artificial meteor contained instruments within its metal shell.

It was equipped with a television receptor which displayed to the city a huge image of Violet Speer.

That was somewhat deceiving. It was not, as I had once thought, an actual screen enlargement of Miss Speer herself; rather, it was the televised enlargement of a delicately carved statue of her.

It announced her coming, just as any one of the great blazing sky advertisements of the times might announce their products: with the most attratcive devices possible for catching the eye. It was no mean psychology on Violet

Speer's part to employ this statue as her manner of appealing to the crowds. For what could be more attractive than such an exquisite image of herself, in the nude?

At once the great electrically lighted boards that flashed their news items to the street crowds sent forth the message:

"Miss Meteor has arrived from Venus. Miss Meteor, with magnetic ship and stellar display, may be seen hovering over the center of the city at this hour."

CHAPTER VIII

Novairre the Wizard

THE hours of waiting passed quickly, and before I could realize it we were again on our way to Venus.

I had never stepped my foot off the ship. The reason was obvious, considering what a different story I might tell about Venus from the one that "Magnetic Miss Meteor" must have told.

None of us three was allowed to talk with the reporters who came upon the ship to interview the engineers, mechanics and guards. It had again become apparent that Lathrop, Midge and I were prisoners.

What had happened during that stop was that Violet Speer had communicated with the Earth people through the medium of loud speakers. She had paid herself some very pretty compliments. She had implied that she was being kept in power on Venus by the hearty support of her subjects there, and that she was building the happiest kingdom in the solar system. And so —what loyal men and true would go back with her to fill some of the important positions that were now available?

"I need only men that are highly skilled. In every case they will be given positions of great responsibility; each with hundreds of workers under him."

This strained the credulity. It was unlikely that each of these volunteers could become the bosses of three men each, let alone a hundred. But it sounded good, and several men came aboard in the earnest hope that they were going forth for a share in Utopia.

To five large cities we had gone. Occasionally Violet Speer had called upon some of the guards or crew to testify to her words. From five cities the new men had come up in the elevator cage to fill passenger compartments. Violet Speer had not neglected to add the very attractive lie that there were great numbers of beautiful girls among the native population of Venus, who looked forward to winning their husbands from these loads of passengers.

The truth was that there had been some intermarrying of this sort, if the remnants of the old American colonists might be called the "native population." But these marriages were rare The hard work and severe discipline were not conducive to marriages.

High pay, beautiful living conditions, delightful homes—with these selling points it was no wonder that there were more applicants than the ship could accommodate. And so, loaded down with men and good will, we sailed for Venus.

On the way back something came up that scared Midget Jupiter so he couldn't eat.

When he managed to convey to me what had happened I was so badly jolted I couldn't talk straight or show my face on the observation deck.

What happened was that one of the guards came to Midge and told him I wanted to see him in a lower room, number 247. Okay, Midge said, he'd go right down.

And so he started. Then he took a notion he'd have a look at our stateroom to make sure I hadn't walked out and left it unlocked (which I never did, but he always thought I would). He looked in, and lo and behold, I was in it!

"I thought you wanted to see me in 247," he said.

"You've been dreaming," I said. "I don't even know of such a room."

HE GAVE me a surprised look and then sauntered out without saying another word. As I thought this over afterward it seemed that he had behaved rather strangely. I wasn't aware that the moment he closed the door he struck out on a one-man investigation of room 247.

He knew at once that someone must have wanted him to step into that room. So, of all things, he swiped a brace and bit from a repair kit and edged around to a room adjacent. This turned out to be a part of the individual breakfast nooks along the rear of the dining hall. He timed his strokes to the ship's rhythmic vibrations and quietly drilled a hole through the wall.

Luckily he wasn't discovered. He returned to the stateroom after one quick eyeful of what could be seen through that wall. When he told me about it I wouldn't believe him until I went down and looked for myself.

Then the three of us—Lathrop included—took turns looking.

"I've seen them before," Midge whispered. "They were in the last batch to come aboard."

"You'll never see them again," said Lathrop.

Then it was my turn for a glimpse at the strange goings-on.

What I saw was a ray-gun demonstration. Here was Violet Speer's experiment involving human beings. *Men were being led in as targets and shot down.*

One at a time these subjects were being admitted to the room. I could hear a door open and close. Then a man, inevitably looking like a drowned rat, would stray into view, usually asking the guard what this was all about.

"They've been saturated with a chemical solution," I whispered. "But it doesn't have any effect on the gunfire."

The guard would wait until the subject had strayed half-way across the room. Then he would pull the trigger. There'd be an instant's flash, like a straight bar of blue lighting. In that split second the luckless man would melt away.

The three of us caught our varying impressions of this weird drama. A few minutes later we were back in the comparative safety of our stateroom talking it over.

"Aside from the unspeakable horror of it," said Lathrop, "It is an amazing thing."

"Amazing? How?" I asked.

"Amazing that that little wizard scientist could stop the rays with his body."

Midge and Lathrop had both seen what I had missed. As we compared observations we knew that the only reason the rays didn't eat straight through the walls of the ship was that they were caught and absorbed by the naked body of this little withered yellow man.

"He is the scientific brains of this outfit," said Lathrop. "I knew these inventions had someone other than Violet Speer back of them. I've been keeping an ear to the ground. This little man's name is Novairre."

"You've seen him, Briff," said Midge to me. "Between their descriptions of this little wizard who would promenade

the observation deck in a snappy pinstriped suit. They spoke of him as having a highly intelligent look."

"The look of a fiend, if you ask me," I said. Which was our common feeling, now that we had seen him at work. He and a couple of guards had run the whole show. The gun victims were the few new volunteers from the Earth who, once aboard, had shown signs of being hard to manage. Their uncooperative tendencies were evidently taken by Violet Speer to be sufficient cause for ridding herself of them. Some of them, I confess, were pretty hard lots—escaped convicts, Lathrop said. But you never know: a good revolution can sometimes make heroes of persons who have, for one reason or another, fallen into an unfortunate relationship with the law.

At any rate these men were being brought in one at a time and melted to nothing by the blast of the atomic pistols, and the very blue blast that turned them into thin air would spray harmlessly against the chest of this fiendish little Novairre just back of them. And he never suffered in the slightest.

Among the three of us we had seen six men lose their lives. That was enough to scare us into a sickness and a panic. Midge and I stuck tight to our stateroom.

MEANWHILE it was difficult managing for Jay Lathrop, for the reports he brought back to us after a visit with Violet Speer were that she was encouraging him to fall in love with her. In fact, she was spiking her advances with little implied threats that he might lose a couple of friends if he didn't show more inclination to be sociable.

"And so I've spent the last two hours reading poetry—nice, peaceful love songs and all sorts of refined sentiments —to this magnetic murderess. What a mess we're in. . . . If I ever get back to the rest of the poor devils she's hounding, I'll never waste another minute on anything but revolution."

Thus spoke the most determined friend I ever knew. And Midge and I were back of him a hundred percent.

But there were several obstacles, long and short. One of them might take a year to overcome. Another might knock at our door at any moment and turn all our plans to naught.

There were going to be three thousand of us now instead of two. Lathrop was weighed down by that.

This new thousand (minus the six or more who would never be accounted for) would be slow to awaken to the need for a revolution. They were coming into the situation blind. That was sure to hamstring us and present any immediate revolutionary play.

"What a bunch of innocents," Lathrop groaned. "I've tried to talk with some of them, but they think I'm a crank. They'll have to see things for themselves. It may take years to swing them into line. At present they can't be organized to listen to our stories, for they're a scattered bunch of ambitious individuals, not a social group."

This was true. They were competitors for the big jobs they thought were waiting. At present they were completely in sympathy with Miss Violet Speer, so they were unlikely to believe that such an attractive woman, showing them her most charming hospitality, could possibly be anything less than a beautiful character.

"It will take time," said Jay Lathrop.

Then came heavy footsteps and a loud knock at our stateroom door. The voice of a guard called, "One hour until we arrive at Venus. Get your things in order."

"We'll be ready," Lathrop called

back. "It will take a few minutes."

"Are the other two men with you?"

"They're here," said Lathrop.

"They were supposed to report to room 247. Why haven't they done so?"

The words sounded like a death sentence. Neither Midge nor I could utter a syllable.

"Why haven't they reported?" the voice barked.

"They must have missed the order," Lathrop. "I'll tell them—"

"Open up!" the guard shouted. "I'll conduct them down myself to be sure they get there. Open up!"

Lathrop opened the door. Not one but four guards in their gaudy red and silver uniforms. They glared in at us with faces as hard as marble.

"This way, you two! Make it snappy!"

CHAPTER IX

A Race from Ray Blasts

WE CAME to our feet and advanced across the room.

I wondered, in that brief second, whether the mean-looking ray-guns in the guards' hands might also contain attachments for shooting old-fashioned steel bullets. I wondered whether they knew that all three of us had guns of our own.

But no—that was our little surprise, and Jay had the honor of springing it.

"Come in here, you devils!" Lathrop snapped. His gun was on them.

For the first time I saw expressions other than insolence in these guards' faces. Talk about surprise. These uniformed bozos were turned ice-cold in their tracks.

"You don't—you don't dare shoot!" the spokesman of the lot stammered. "The ship can't take it!"

"That's why we're got you," Lathrop said, and the way he clipped his words they knew he meant business. "We don't give a damn about the ship!"

We were with him, whatever he meant to do. Our guns were ready. And unless these guards had the means to fill us with lead, we could run this bluff just as far as they. Anyhow we thought we could.

The biggest of the guards, who had done most of the talking, began to curse.

"Shut up!" said Lathrop, brandishing his gun.

The four guards began to mumble and whimper, and then they came toward us, and it looked as if our bluff was done.

"Shall I shoot 'em?" Midge yelled.

Before Lathrop could give a cue one way or the other our telephone rang. That froze both sides of us momentarily.

As if I wasn't already frozen from fear. The thought of a ray-gun battle while we were still out in space was a contemplation of suicide, nothing else. The air within this enclosed shell would leak away in a hurry at the rate we were roaring through space. As for our magnetic properties that carried our meteoroids along, it was anyone's guess how they might be affected if the walls were blasted through.

The phone rang a second time, and Lathrop made the big guard answer it.

"It's Novairre, the scientist," said the guard, holding his hand over the mouthpiece. "He wants to know what about these two men."

"Tell him they're on their way down."

The guard obeyed and hung up. Instantly the phone rang again.

"It's Violet Speer," said the guard.

"What does she want?" said Lathrop.

"You," said the guard. "You're to meet her on the observation deck to watch the landing at Venus."

"Tell her she can wait for me," said Lathrop. But the guard hung up.

"She wants you now. She's sending a five-guard escort."

"So she doesn't trust me!"

"You said it!" the guard said. He suddenly opened up, and his three companions smirked knowingly at what he had to say. "She's got your number, smart boy. She knows you're heading up a revolution. You've already started to work on these new passengers."

Another guard helped him pour it on. "You won't get far, buddy. She's got you trapped."

And a third put in, "Got any last words, mister? You'll never get home alive."

"In that case—" Lathrop advanced a step with his gun. "Get out of those uniforms. Get out or I'll shoot."

"The hell with you," said the big guard. "You don't dare——"

LATHROP pulled the trigger. The bolt of magic blue lightning went out straight and hard, and in that split second one of the four guards vanished. He was gone, from his last evil breath to his very shoestrings.

But that wasn't all that was gone. A chunk of stateroom wall was missing. A section of utility pipes was out. And beyond them more walls blasted. A straight oval tunnel had been cut instantly, clean through the ship.

The daring deed was done, and for a moment the three remaining guards and the three of us were the only ones on board who knew the meaning of that weird whistling sound that began to echo through the ship.

That was the sound of the ship's air supply being dissipated!

There were well over a thousand persons on board, and each of them would have a goodly amount of breathing to do in the next forty-five minutes. And right now the air was sucking away so fast that in one quick glance I saw a pack of papers, a folding table and two chairs dart into the open tunnel and shoot out into the void.

All of which happened in hardly more than three or four seconds from the time that Jay Lathrop fired the shot.

Two more shots were fired. Whether they removed anyone from another deck I wouldn't know. I was too busy swinging my fists. The three guards had rushed us. Somebody knocked my gun out of aim just as I pulled the trigger and I had a quick vision of a new tunnel overhead that cut through toward a sickly amber sun in a very black sky.

My fists collided with a jaw and a guard went down. He grabbed the open wall as if bracing himself against a suction. I thought he was out of the picture, then, and I went to Midge's rescue.

But suddenly the fallen guard was coming up at me, and there was a ray-gun in his hands. I was sure it was all over with me then. He kept his distance. I backed away, hands aloft. He had me cut off from the others.

The last I saw of them they were holding their own in a tooth-and-nail fight. But I was beyond help. The guard ordered me through the door and down the corridor. There was no reason why he shouldn't shoot me outright. One hole more or less through the hull of the ship couldn't make much difference now.

But here it was again—the amazing sense of duty that these guards held toward their superiors. Orders were for me to go into the experimental slaughter-house in room 247, and this guard was going to see that I got there.

That's all I wanted to know. I'd go there—but fast. Beginning with the next corner I rounded. Measured step until then. Perfect obedience. Not a

sign of any false intentions. Wasn't I simply a captive with no knowledge of my fate?

The next corner—ten steps ahead. The scream of escaping air was growing louder. Now an alarm was ringing through the ship. Pandemonium—

The corner! I flew—two steps and a bound, I was through a door. It slammed behind me like an explosion.

I thought it would be blasted open, then, with ray-gun fire. But I never stopped to see. I raced ahead through the dark room, crashing against tables and glass tubes. My hands reached out in a vain effort to find something that would offer a hiding place. Still the door did not open. A cool metal wall was before me, its sweating moisture against my groping hands. The top was within reach. If I could climb over swiftly this might be the answer.

I swung myself over.

Splash! Down I went into a tank of water! Or was it oil? At any rate I was hidden for the moment. And it was a good thing, for just then the doors began opening—three or four of them from various sides of the room.

I heard a rush of foosteps, a shouting of orders. From the talk there must have been some individual oxygen tanks stored in this room. Above the clamor from other parts of the ship I could hear the wheels of a small truck rolling out of the room, which meant that a supply of oxygen was on its way to some anxious consumers.

For my own part I was breathing easily again and I liked the patch of ceiling above me too well to desire a change of scenery.

CHAPTER X

Kandaroff on Trial

THE change came, however, in a very few minutes. The sounds of signals told me that the ship had come to a stop at its old port of Venus, safe if not quite sound.

It remained only for me to find Midge and Lathrop and get ourselves down to the ground a half mile below in the most comfortable way possible.

Midge I found within the next hour. He was amazed to find me alive, and observed that I resembled a soaked rat. Together we dodged guards for the next three hours looking for Lathrop.

He wasn't to be found. We decided he must have gotten down to the surface somehow. We refused to believe that a ray-gun had claimed him. From all evidences, the obedient guards must have had orders not to shoot inside the ship.

Our feet were on the solid ground of Venus again, and there they were destined to stay until the next year. Somewhere Ellen was waiting to greet me, and I could hardly wait to tell her all that had happened.

A year before a revolution could be launched, now that these new men had come?

A full year, Lathrop had said, would be required. We who were to take over the reins of leadership remembered his words.

And so a year was allowed to pass, after our return, before our hopes rose and we began to lay out our scheme for this action.

A year made a wonderful and terrifying difference. Over half of these newcomers were gone. They had just not been able to stand up under Magnetic Miss Meteor's slave-driving system.

Many had gone up the mountains for a change of climate. Always one victim at a time, so that there was little chance for any widespread violence.

Now it was known throughout this workers' realm what it meant to go over the mountain. Other spies, like our-

selves, had followed to see the tragedy for themselves. In more than one case it was the guards who did not come back. As a result, that old stormy warhorse, Kandaroff, was now in the company of fifty of the most savage of rebels; those who, like himself, had escaped the jaws of death. But Kandaroff was no longer spending all his time in solitude. He now had four or five "underground" posts within the main settlement, and here he would meet the various leaders of the revolutionary party.

In short, in the year, earth time, Kandaroff had risen to a position of prophet and a moving spirit. You could feel the fires of hatred when his eyes looked at you. You could study his deep-lined face and feel the agonies of the whip. He had been through death; he had come back from it determined to deliver us.

THE ship that hovered over us again was as good as new, according to the rumors. And its tyrannical mistress was as determined as ever to enslave us, or kill us if we would not bend to the yoke.

Once she sent Novairre down by the half-mile elevator to spy on us. He came on the pretense of studying the meteoroids which hung over our heads like a death sentence.

Novairre did not stay long. From a distance he commanded a certain respect because of his scientific knowledge. Rumors of his genius would float down to us from time to time. But when he showed his face along the streets within view of the sweating, toiling workmen, his look of dire evil aroused an unrest that foreboded murder.

Once Novairre inquired the source of certain tons of fresh earth with which a ravine was being filled. He was openly defied. If Violet Speer wanted to know where that dirt came from, let *her* come down and inquire—if she dared.

Navairre returned to his sky laboratories. In his place came Wilhelm Hegoland, the lawyer.

Hegoland was a big, blustery citizen and in the numerous years that he had been a part of Violet's society he had been her most outspoken champion. Now it came to Hegoland that these mysterious meetings among the workers could be stopped He set a trap for Kandaroff and caught him.

"A public trial for Kandaroff!" came the amplified announcement from the space ship hour after hour. "Kandaroff will die; but not until he has revealed who saved his life and murdered the guards."

And so the settlement stopped work and gathered in the vast space clearing beneath the lines of meteoroids. They hung oppressively low. Everyone knew they could drop without warning. In the very first of them, the artificial one, was the enormous image of Violet Speer—not the statue, but the heartless reality. She was sitting on her throne on the observation deck. But to all of us assembled she seemed immediately before us as she judged the trial.

"Kandaroff, who saved your life? Speak up!" Wilhelm Hegoland barked. He and the others stood stiffly in their black boots and red uniforms, the silver belts and epaulettes glistening. Poor old Kandaroff was a shabby creature in contrast. There was deep sadness in his eyes. Before he spoke I was sure that he would never give us away. But it was a pitiful thing to realize what he would do—simply give himself away to save our hope of freedom.

"I was not rescued by any man," he said slowly.

"A woman, then."

"What rescued me was no human being," he said.

"Explain yourself," Hegoland snapped.

"I was rescued by the native animals of this planet, the rajlouts."

"You lie. How could a rajlout rescue you?"

"Have you seen the big ones?" Kandaroff asked "The ones from across the third mountain range, creatures of mighty stature who have the feet of humans?"

This brought a murmur of wonderment from all listeners, and a thrill of gratefulness from those of us who knew he was lying. Even the expression on the magnified face of Violet Speer took on a look of bafflement.

"You lie," said Hegoland steadily. "No man has ever been over the third range. The original colonists here found that the second range was an impassable barrier."

"You will find larger rajlouts beyond the third range," said Kandaroff stubbornly. "They have great feet and legs like men, and the time will come when they will make trouble for this space port."

"How so?"

"They will release impounded waters that will flood this flat land"

"What basis have you for these outlandish statements?"

"I have talked with them."

"Impossible! Even if they had a language you couldn't know it. You're one with the rest of these workers from the Earth who got hooked into coming here. Aren't you? Speak up!"

"You're wrong I *was* here."

"So—you're a descendant of the colonists. So much the worse for you, breaking into the peace of our new society. But that lie doesn't go. You can't show me any early colonist that claims to talk with rajlouts."

"I did not give you my full pedigree," said Kandaroff defiantly.

THE lawyer ignored this remark. He followed what he thought was his advantage, angling for a demonstration.

"Rajlout language! Very well, I'll call before the court a few of these early colonists and see whether any of them can talk it, like you claim you can."

Ellen Kenzie was standing beside me, and this suggestion caused her to tremble. These lies of Kandaroff had been an easy evasion at first, but now they threatened to get us into deep water. Suppose Hegoland should decide to call a number of these poor, ignorant citizens into this inquisition. Suppose he should reveal what they thought and felt about Violet Speer's rule. Our revolution would be lost again, perhaps permanently. Our extra arm, the remaining colonists, might be sliced off and used as a club against us.

"Can you name two dozen native colonists who can speak a language understood by the swamp monsters?"

There was brutal determination in Hegoland's voice as he cracked the whip of legal prosecude.

"My people knew the language," said Kandaroff calmly, "but you would not understand my ancestry."

The lawyer turned to the guards.

"Go into the crowds or out to the hinterlands and get me the first two dozen sons and daughters of colonists that you can find."

CHAPTER XI

The Lid's Off!

"THEY'LL get me!" Ellen whispered. "Don't let them!"

"Keep close behind me," I said. Those of the crowd near us understood and they tightened the ranks around the two of us to keep Ellen hidden.

Then Hegoland was shouting something at Kandaroff that made every one stop and listen, and the guards stopped their search just as one of them was breaking into our tight cluster with his eyes on Ellen.

"What's that?" Hegoland was shouting. "What about your pedigree?" You say you're a *half breed?"*

"I am!" Kandaroff shouted, with the surprising power of a lie of desperation. Or was it a lie of desperation?

"I am only *half* early colonist. The other half is from an earlier stock—*not men!"*

"Then what, if not men?"

"The half-human breed of rajlouts that held this planet before any man ever came. The traditions are still in my veins. My blood is green, the same as the larger, half-human rajlouts. We owned this planet. *And I, the last of them, still own it!"*

It was at once the noblest and most daring lie I had ever heard; it made Hegoland gasp with rage and utter confusion. Then instantly he whipped out a knife and said, "We'll see whether you're lying. We'll see if your blood is green."

"I'll prove it," said Kandaroff, and he held forth his wrist.

But as the knife came down toward it, Kandaroff's steel fingers came up with a vise grip. The knife changed hands in a flash. The crowd gasped. Instantly the blade swung with the swift fire of fury, all of Kandaroff's power back of it. It plunged square into Hegoland's throat. Then Kandaroff ran.

THE guards tried to burst out of the crowd. A squad of eight or ten had stood by when the others had entered the crowd looking for colonists. This free squad swung up with their guns at Kandaroff.

Nothing could stop them. They melted the old man out of existence quicker than it can be told. But Kandaroff's work was done.

Not one of those eight guards lived to boast their deed. Other guns were in play by this time. Those guns from the guards in the crowd had suddenly changed hands. All at once the lid was off The riot was on, and it was anyone's guess who might get killed.

I myself had the pleasure of turning a stream of deadly fire on three of the red uniforms. Midge Jupiter was there to take his toll. If only Jay Lathrop could have been with us!

Then a whoosh of breeze against our hair told us that the real power was in action. The great weapon of Violet Speer herself: the hanging meteoroids! Into action they went.

We fled in a hundred directions. They swung their deadly weight like pendulums. One of them, touching its curved surface to the ground, swung free of the magnetic power and rambled off straight down the line. Three workers and a gang of boys were rolled under. It crashed on across one of the low buildings a quarter mile beyond.

"The trenches!" someone cried out. All at once everybody was crying, "The trenches! Take to the trenches!"

For beneath this great floor the workers had cut tunnels in anticipation of a time when these great death balls might come swinging down at them. Novairre might well have wondered where the heaps of freshly dug dirt had come from.

In this construction only a thin surface remained as the ceiling of each tunnel—the floor of the space port plane.

Now, as the second of the meteoroids bounded down at us with a terrific impact, I saw neat rows of these ceilings fall through. The trenches broke into being before our eyes like the work of a well-planned earthquake, their crusted-over surfaces clattering down like thin ice.

I was holding Ellen's hand and we raced for the nearest trench, then dodged back to take another, for a great rolling object, the third to strike, was cutting off our path. Almost over us! Its flying debris struck my arm, and the snap against my fingers was like something electric.

We joined the stampede to our right. As we approached the next trench, the dust of another rolling monster was blowing in our faces. I caught Ellen by the waist and swung her down into the ditch, tumbling in after her just as the great crunching ball swept over us. We came up out of the heap, then, and I brushed the chunks of earth from Ellen's hair as we ran down the trench.

Then we were safe. From here we could watch the ire in the face of Violet Speer as she contemplated her troubles. Her soldiers were in for a fight.

DOWN came the great elevator cage filled with more starchy red and silver guards. Our guns held off until they swished to the ground. When they streamed out of the door, we gave them fire. The straight blue bars of lightning melted everything in their paths. A few of the guards found their way to the trenches, but most of them vanished.

Up went the cage. We knew that the powers in the ship overhead were caught for a strategy. It gave us a moment for our own to form. Then here came another cage load, forty or more of them, leaning over the sides pouring their fire at our trenches.

That was a costly deal for us. Our heavy sacrifices had only begun. It appeared that these forty or so would not be unloaded, but would be allowed to swing over one trench after another.

Here came the cage and the luminous blue gun streams. I yelled at Midge to watch Ellen, for I was going to jump. But he was ahead of me, catching the side of the elevator cage as it swung like a cray pendulum close along the surface. Up it went, a foot off the ground, just as he caught onto it. A cable swung in my direction and I grabbed it. Ellen screamed and tried to pull me back.

"No! No! No!" I heard her cry.

I wouldn't get far unless the gods of luck were with me. I saw one of the guns aim at me. But someone bobbed up beyond me with a stream of fire that cut the gunman through the head and shoulders.

The pendulum, a moment at rest, began to swing back from the change of course of the great ship overhead. It was then I discovered that Ellen had come up off the ground with me. She was clutching my ankle, swinging in mid air, and we were going up—up—

She dared not let go now, but it would take a superhuman grip to hold. Suddenly she slipped off, and I had visions of her falling into the ruins of the old government building. The sharp-pointed stones jutted upward only a few yards beneath the path of her fall. How it all happened so quickly I'll never know. But Midge, bless his heart, somehow kicked one of the dangling loops of the elevator cable. It whipped out to her and she hooked an arm over it.

In three quick hand-over-hand strokes I was into the car with Midge. Together we tugged at the looped cable. Swiftly, steadily, Ellen came up. Her sun-browned arm caught over the

edge of the floor. I caught her wrist and flung an arm to her waist. And then she was with us, safe in the cage. Yes, safe, temporarily. Some of our sharpshooter friends in the trenches had cleared the way for us. The unfriendly arms and heads that had shown themselves above the cage wall were gone. The armless, decapitated bodies which now lay on the cage floor were as harmless as the red and silver uniforms that adorned them.

"Quick! Get under the red coats!" I yelled.

We tore off some garments and covered ourselves with them. And then we prayed to the gods of luck again—prayed that the observers from the big ship above us wouldn't know that they had taken on a trio of revolutionists.

CHAPTER XII

Exit Violet

SOME of the cables that supported us had been cut through from the ray blasts. Now another gave way and we were tipped to one side of the cage. We were going up fast. The engineer was determined to draw the cage in before he lost it completely.

Hastily we took what guns we could use. We were well supplied by the time we reached the top of the ascent. The blackness of the doorway closed around us.

A group of guards waited to get in. They wasted hardly a glance on us. The engineer was shouting at them. "You'll have to wait till I get the elevator fixed. You can't go down there."

"We had our orders from the boss," one of the guards retorted. "Send us down."

"Let the boss give her orders to me," the engineer retorted.

The look in that engineer's eye was good to see. Any quarrel among the high moguls, I figured, was a boost for us. We waited, unnoticed, to catch the lay of the land. Plainly this engineer had been fed up with being run around in circles by the scientific wizard, Novairre.

"Let Violet give me her orders," he repeated. "Otherwise the elevator stays right where she is."

At that moment Violet appeared. She was in a bad mood, but there was nothing she wanted so much as cooperation from her guards and crew. "What's the matter here?"

"I'm running this ship for you," the engineer said. "I'll do anything for you. But I've had my fill of taking hard-boiled orders from that scientific demon."

"I see." Violet Speer looked worried. "Remember, Novairre was the one that devised all these things. He was the one that formulated the different chemical solutions—"

"Most of which didn't work. Your guards are being killed off like flies."

"Because they are loyal," said Violet Speer. "Without solution D, they'd be deserting. Look at them now pour into the fray."

"What about these that came back up?" asked the engineer, giving his head a toss in our direction.

Violet Speer's amazed stare was on us, a stare that quickly changed to a murderous glare.

All right, my time had come. At least I'd go down fighting. Furthermore, before I got rubbed out there was a question I wanted answered. What had happened to Jay Lathrop? I knew he was either dead or a prisoner here in the ship all these months past. If he was here, I was damned sure he hadn't stayed from choice. But I wanted it from Violet Speer's own lips.

"It's you," she said, as if the dis-

covery amused her. "So you've come back to ——"

"To straighten accounts," I snapped. "Where is he? What did you do with him?"

MY TWO ray-guns, together with Midge's and Ellen's, argued for a quick answer, no fooling. The guards fell back in a huddle. The engineer's eyes grew wide with dismay. He didn't like to see his beloved boss theatened.

"Bring him out," I repeated. "One false move and I'll blast you and your damned ship into smithereens. Keep the engineer covered, Midge."

"I've got him covered," said Midge, "but he keeps coming."

"If you turn that blast on me," said the engineer, "you'll lose the only knowledge in existence on how to maneuver this ship. That damned Novairre don't know what I know. Your first trip through the skies will bring meteoroids crashing into the hull—"

"To the devil with the ship!" Midge cried. "Give us Jay Lathrop or we'll blast the whole business to hell!"

Violet Speer reached for her gun. I let her have it. It 'most killed me to shoot at a woman! Magnetic Miss Meteor, whose visits had electrified the Earth. I shot her—and I thought I saw, if I did not actually see, the horror in the eyes of my beloved Ellen that I would do such a thing. The engineer was lunging at me, but that didn't stop me. I shot at Violet Speer. The blue death blasted the clothes from her statuesque body, blasted the flesh from her frame—and then—*then there was still a living creature that would not melt away!*

It was Violet Speer transformed—Violet Speer no longer feminine! It was Novairre himself!

"You can't kill me!" The little wicked yellow face was grinning defiance at death. "I've protected myself against this moment."

As well as I knew my own name I knew that what he said was true. We had seen him stand against the rays just as he stood now. By some further scientific magic he had concealed his evil self within the likeness of a beautiful woman from time to time through these years of his growing power. Violet Speer—Magnetic Miss Meteor—he stood revealed before up now.

Midge's life, Ellen's and my own were in the balance. My brazen attack had been foiled, and now a guard—one who stood in a paralysis of amazement, allowed Novairre to seize his ray gun. In that split second the blue death came at me in a sure, straight blast.

My last thought! A hideous realization that I was leaving Ellen in the hands of this beast. My last thought . . .

But was death from a ray-gun not instantaneous? Or could it be that my mind went on thinking even as the rays splashed against my chest? *I was not dying!* Every scrap of clothing disappeared from my shoulders and chest, and still I did not melt away.

At that moment the engineer, once faithful follower of Violet, unleashed his pent-up hatreds. He plunged forward with all his power and caught the wizard of science by the throat.

"You've played your last trick, Novairre! You've whipsawed me and trapped me between hate and love—love for something that didn't exist: Violet Speer! The ageless, deathless spirit! Deathless? We'll see!"

"No! No!" Novairre cried. "We can work together——"

"Together? You've had your chance to show me all about that. If you've got any solution to save you from choking to death, now's the time!"

Crunch! The outcries of Novairre

changed to a low, horrible croaking. That went on, and for some astonishing reason the guards stood by unmoved. They were saturated with a solution of loyalty—a loyalty that was meant for the voice and form of Violet Speer, not the masculine self within.

Novairre fell lifeless to the floor.

We stood back wondering what the engineer would do next. Were we friend or foe?

HE TURNED to us slowly and wept as he spoke. "For all these years I've believed Violet Speer's cruelties were forced upon her by Novairre. She led me on. I saturated myself with the solutions of loyalty—just as you guards did—and now——"

"Now you've won the revolution for us," came the quiet voice of Jay Lathrop, coming in past the silent guards. "You and these friends of mine who dared to come up."

Some of the guards, looking down at the trenches, weren't so sure.

"They're still fighting down there, sir," one of them said, and the respect with which he addressed Jay Lathrop was notable. "You see, sir, our companions don't know that she's gone—I mean *he*——"

Another guard suggested, "Can't you use the television screen, sir, and tell them?"

These were telltale words. The revolution had been going on all the time up here. I should have known it. Jay Lathrop was the natural leader, the kind that earns loyalty by his fairness. How he had escaped the treacheries of Novairre we might never know. But here he was, very much alive and very much needed.

Lathrop called down through the amplifier and gave forth with powerful words that terminated all the conflict. That for which the people were fighting was already won! Coming from Jay Lathrop, echoing the unforgotten battlecry of old man Kandaroff, these good tidings jolted the Venus settlement with something more powerful than falling meteors.

Meanwhile, Ellen recalled that her people had an old legend about a leader named Hitler whose evil heart led him to make depredations upon civilization. "The legend ended," said Ellen, "in an awful tragedy for him."

"Did they finally choke him?" the engineer asked.

"The whole world moved in upon him and choked the life out of him and his followers."

Far down below us the fighting had ceased. Man's eternal ideas of freedom and good will and fair play were to be restored for this planet's coming civilization.

Ellen turned to me, and so did Lathrop. They wanted an explanation. "How was it you escaped death from the atomic gun?"

"I don't know," I said. "I don't understand it—unless it was from that time a guard chased me here on the ship, and I tumbled into a vat of liquid."

"Solution E!" said Midge. "I wonder if there's any left. I could use a bath myself. . . . But on second thought, skip it. I might get the wrong bath and turn into a violet."

THE END

BUY WAR BONDS

Don't let the cost of this war pile up a huge mountain of debt that will rob your children of a chance to be happy and to live the life that is rightfully theirs!

PAY YOUR OWN WAY TO VICTORY AND PEACE!

★ HOME MADE SUBMARINES ★

By AL HERMAN

SINCE the silver water beetle larvae have no gills, it is not possible for them to utilize the oxygen contained in the water. The silver water beetle must now solve a very ticklish problem indeed—namely, how to get air to her larvae underwater.

The silver water beetle has found a unique solution to this perplexing problem. She has devised a home made submarine, as efficient in serving madame beetle's needs as the submarine made by man. This underwater house is spun from silk and attached to water weeds under the surface. A tube extends from this silk hut to the free air above the surface of water. When the larvae eggs hatch, the larvae can get all the fresh air they need by virtue of its long ventilating tube.

One of the greatest mysteries is how the mother beetle knows how high above the water level to construct this ventilating tube—for if a wave should enter and flood the submarine house below, the beetle larvae are sure to die. To this question no one seems to have an answer. Mrs. Beetle, perhaps by intuition, just seems to know the height of water waves about her ventilating tube and rarely does she miss her delicately balanced calculations.

The silver water beetle is not the only insect to make use of an underwater device. A certain aquatic spider, Argyronita Aquatica, to the scientist, also builds a silk underwater contraption. The spider's home looks more like a silk diving bell, actually, it is an inverted silk hemisphere with space inside for air. Instead of depending upon an air tube for the air supply in her underwater diving bell, the spider emerges to the surface when the air supply is getting low and gets her own air to take back home.

The method with which the spider carries air to her underwater bell is very amazing. The spider actually traps molecules of air between the tiny hair fibres of her body when she emerges from the water. When the spider again gets into her diving bell she seems capable of removing those air molecules from inside her hair and filling up the air space of the diving bell with air.

In the case of the spider the setup is purely a defensive gesture. It affords him the greatest security from enemies.

Why Man's Prayers Did Not Stop Hitler

Millions of people daily practice meditation, prayer, new thought and other spiritual exercises. For many years people of good will have been praying for the overthrow of Hitler, Hirohito and what they stand for. Why has the answer been so long delayed? Why do so many other prayers remain unanswered? Why does calamity often befall us in spite of our prayers?

Thirty years ago, in Forbidden Tibet, behind the highest mountains in the world, a young Englishman named Edwin J. Dingle found the answers to these questions. A great mystic opened his eyes. A great change came over him. He realized the strange Power that Knowledge gives.

That Power, he says, can transform the life of anyone. Questions, whatever they are, can be answered. The problems of health, death, poverty and wrong can be solved.

In his own case he was brought back to splendid health. He acquired wealth, too, as well as world-wide professional recognition. Thirty years ago he was sick as a man could be and live. Once his coffin was bought. Years of almost continuous tropical fevers, broken bones, near blindness, privation and danger had made a human wreck of him, physically and mentally.

He was about to be sent back to England to die when a strange message came—"They are waiting for you in Tibet." He wants to tell the whole world what he learned there under the guidance of the greatest mystic he ever encountered during his 21 years in the Far East. He wants everyone to experience the greater health and the Power which there came to him.

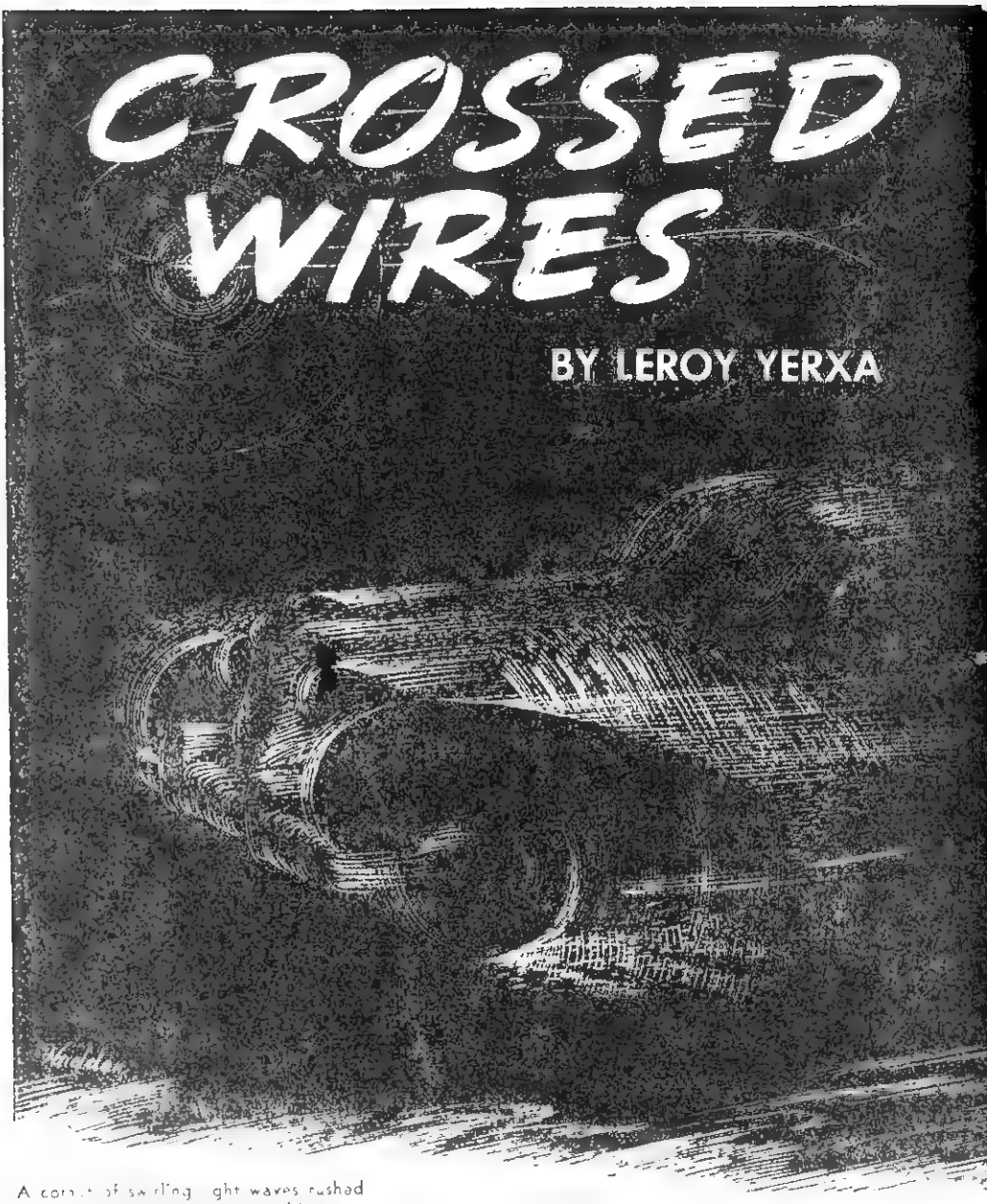
Within 10 years he was able to retire to this country with a fortune. He had been honored by fellowships in the World's leading geographical societies for his work as a geographer. And today, 30 years later, he is still so athletic, capable of so much work, so young in appearance, it is hard to believe he has lived so long.

As a first step in their progress toward the Power that Knowledge gives, Mr. Dingle wants to send to readers of this notice a 9,000-word treatise. It is free. For your free copy, send your name and address to the Institute of Mentalphysics, 213 South Hobart Blvd., Dept. H-196, Los Angeles 4, Calif. Write promptly.

(Advertisement)

CROSSED WIRES

BY LEROY YERXA

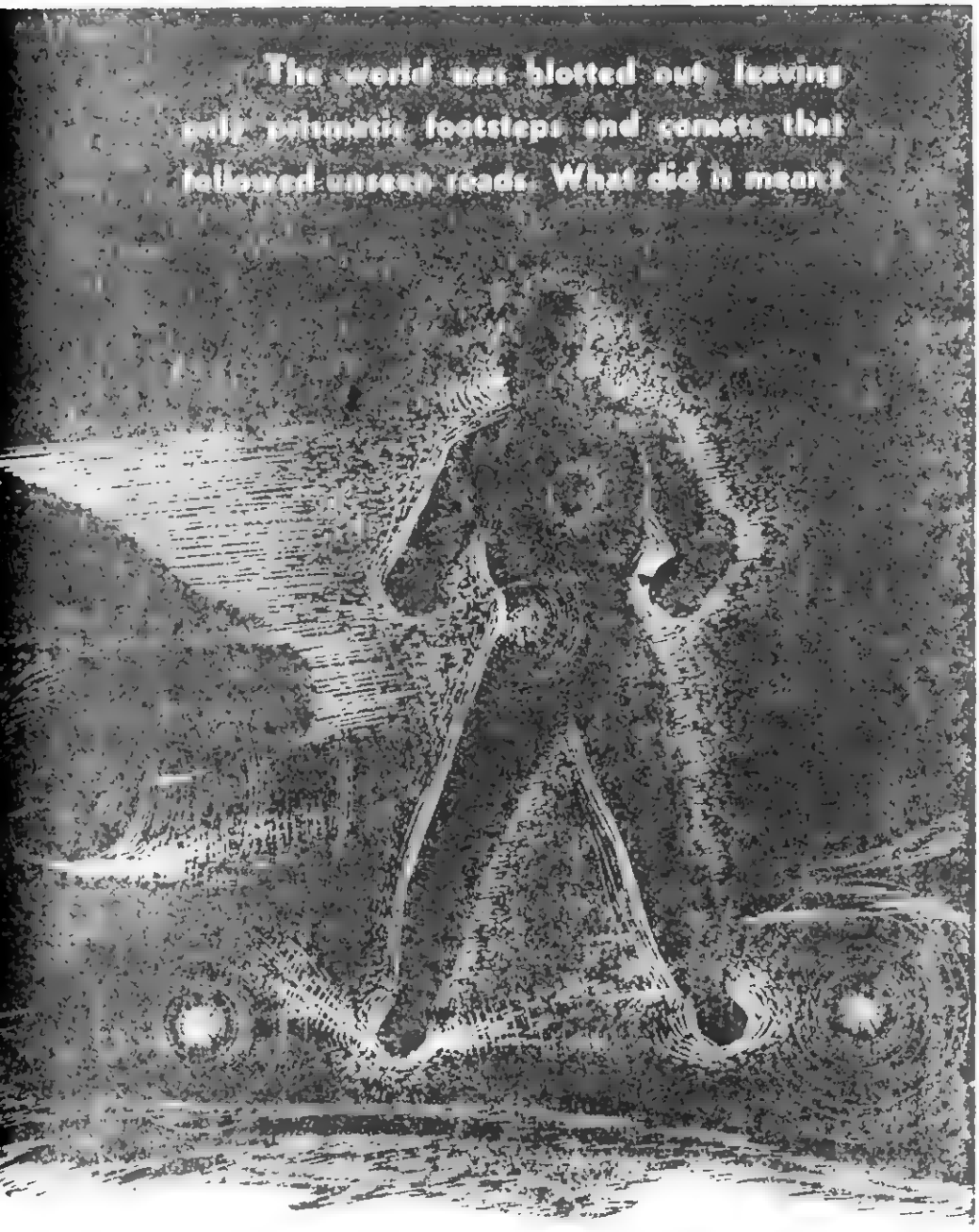


A corn.t of swirling ght waves rushed past me, dazz ng me to near-blindness

JIM GARFIELD sauntered from his office and hesitated between going outside for a cigarette or entering the projection room. He chose the latter. He wandered down the hall to the door marked, *Keep Out Projection Room*, and went in. The room was dark. Walter Marsh leaned over a small scanning machine in the far corner, a single bulb lighting his face.

"Walter," Garfield said cheerfully, "why in hell don't you get out for a little sunshine once in a while?"

Marsh straightened quickly, startled



He had been in- on the film.

"Hello, Jim." Marsh turned off the machine and pressed the switch that lighted the small studio. He blinked rilliance of the light. "Tak- ... it that Jones film. The Government thinks it's pretty important."

Garfield sauntered down the short aisle of the studio and flopped into an easy chair.

"But why use the scanning machine?" he protested. "That th

one of the finest sound jobs I ever made. Spent six months in Japan, before the war, filming it. What can you get out of it without hearing the sound track?"

Marsh shrugged. He admired Garfield for his six feet of poise and easy-going handsomeness. He wondered, however, how long it would take to pound a point into Jim's head.

"Our old argument coming up again, I see," he said. "I've told you a hundred times that I don't need to *hear* the sound track. If I see it in the scanning machine, that's enough."

Garfield place a long leg over the arm of his chair and scowled.

"Wait a minute," he said. "Might as well settle this myth of yours for all time. Prove it."

"Prove what?" Marsh asked.

"That you can tell every sound, every bit of conversation by scanning the track. Brother, *I've* got to be shown, and it'll be worth a free lunch for the man who can show me."

Marsh grinned. It was a good-natured grin that marked him as the lover of a joke. Marsh had the ability to laugh at himself as readily as at the next fellow.

"All right," he said. "I haven't seen the film for a couple of years. Suppose you start the machine, cover the image with your hand and let me tell you 'what goes' on the sound track?"

Garfield frowned, got to his feet a little reluctantly and went to the scanner. While he started the motor, Marsh switched out the studio light once more. The projection-room was warm and the running film sent up the pleasant odor of hot celluloid. Garfield masked the picture with his hand.

"Go ahead, master mind," he invited. "I'm ready."

Marsh leaned close to the machine, squinting at the wavering sound-track on the edge of the film. He chuckled.

"This is a scene of Mount Asama erupting," he said. "Lots of lava, smoke, and all that."

The studio was silent for several seconds. The film clicked along rapidly.

"Try again," Garfield invited.

Marsh glanced up. His smile was gone.

"I don't get it," he admitted.

Garfield laughed.

"Give up?"

Marsh leaned over the machine again.

"Don't get me wrong," he said. "I can read the track all right. I just don't understand where this scene came from. It has nothing to do with the Japanese takes. Seems to be a conversation between a couple of old settlers. I'd say from the track that they're somewhere in Alaska."

Garfield removed his hand quickly.

"How the hell . . .?" His eyebrows lifted.

Walter Marsh stared at the exposed film. It *was* an Alaskan scene. Two trappers were standing before a snow-drifted store. He stepped away from the machine and turned on the lights.

"Does that prove anything?" he asked.

Jim Garfield was completely overwhelmed.

"You're damned right it does," he admitted ruefully. "It proves that I tacked that northern scene on just to catch you. It didn't work. By golly, Walter, you're a whizz."

Marsh was already busy rewinding the film.

"I've been in this game for a long time," he said. "I don't know what good it does me to read that track, but it wins bets and buys dinners."

Garfield started slowly up the aisle.

toward the door. He turned his head.

"Which reminds me," he said. "I'm hungry. Leave the film until we have time for a bite of lunch. I guess it's on me."

REX HUNTER, gray-haired and in his fifties, stared with admiration at the girl across the table.

"Kid," he said admiringly, "every time I take you out, you manage to dress more stunningly. Who buys your clothes?"

Phyllis Hunter's eyes twinkled.

"I ought to slap your face for that remark, Dad. You picked this outfit yourself. It *is* nice."

Hunter picked up his cocktail, took a long swallow and placed the empty glass on the cloth.

"A beautiful girl of twenty-three, slim as a pursuit plane and covered from neck to foot with silver sequins. Girl, you're more like your mom every day. *There* was a doll."

Phyllis' eyes grew misty.

"She must have been lovely, Dad."

Rex Hunter's face grew a shade more solemn. The crow's feet in the corners of his gray eyes deepened.

"Two of the grandest women in the world." His hand crept across the table and dropped on Phyllis' slim fingers. "Two from the same mold."

Phyllis broke the spell.

"Come now, enough dreaming. You were going to tell me about Uncle Sam and all the money *Talking News* is going to make."

Hunter frowned.

"Take it easy, kid." He lowered his voice. "About that money. I've decided to skip the cash deal and make the Government a present of that film."

Phyllis looked almost relieved. She leaned across the table, lips parted in a pleased oval.

"Oh! Dad, I'm glad. They could have demanded the film for nothing, but they offered you lots of money for it. It's darn near noble of you to turn the money down."

Rex Hunter flushed.

"Not noble," he said. "Just my way of buying bonds. You see, Uncle Sam needs that film. The pictures were taken during peace-time. It shows almost every strategic coastal spot, city and town in Japan. Jim Garfield took it several years back and there's a lot of money tied up in it. It's been locked up since the war started. If Uncle Sam needs it, we'll deliver it free of charge."

Phyllis' eyes lifted suddenly toward the door of the Silver Grill.

"Speak of the devil," she said in a pleased voice. "Jim's coming in now with Walter Marsh, old 'darkroom dynamite' himself."

HUNTER turned and caught sight of the pair. He held up his hand, waited for Garfield to see him, then motioned them both to his table. Jim Garfield's eyes flashed with pleasure. The two men came toward them through the maze of tables.

Hunter turned to his daughter.

"You lay off Marsh," he said threateningly. "He may be quiet and all that, but he's okay."

Phyllis shrugged.

"Any man who can stay in that projection room with me when a feature length picture is running, without trying to wolf a kiss, isn't a man." She shrugged, a devilish grin on her lips. "He's part of the film, that's all."

Hunter chuckled.

"Part of the film?" he said. "Yes, I guess Walter *is* almost a part of the film."

"And a mighty dull part at that," Phyllis had a parting shot as Marsh and Garfield reached the table.

"Sit down, fellows," Hunter said.

"Say, Marsh, do you think the original of that Japanese masterpiece is in good shape?"

"I like that *masterpiece* business," Jim Garfield interrupted. "That couldn't be a crack against your best photographer?"

A laugh went around the table, and Marsh answered Hunter.

"It will do," he said. "I'd suggest that we make a copy and keep the original. Might be a good idea to lock it in the morgue."

Hunter's brows lifted slightly and Phyllis chuckled. She turned to Garfield.

"Isn't that just like Walter?" she asked. "He'll protect your film. I didn't know you were that good."

If Walter Marsh noticed the sarcasm in her voice, he ignored it.

"I'll feel better if it's locked up," he said. "I looked that film over carefully this morning. I find it's even better than I remembered. Jim didn't miss one point of military importance. The coastal scenes—the Tokyo layout—are all perfect. It's just possible that the Japs themselves might like to get hold of the film."

Hunter swore softly.

"I had thought of that." He leaned forward. "The F.B.I. will pick up the original tonight. Meanwhile I'll call them and tell them what you're doing. Run off another copy of the entire film, pack it carefully, and lock it up."

Jim Garfield had started a private conversation with Phyllis.

"Probably the prettiest dress I've ever seen," he was saying. "Say, have you two business men finished your conference? If you have, let's eat. I owe Walter the best meal money can buy."

Phyllis Hunter looked surprised.

"You owe Walter?"

Garfield nodded.

"I'd like to tell you about it."

"Jim," Walter Marsh protested quickly, "you promised it was between you and me."

Phyllis looked displeased and Hunter himself wondered what it was all about.

"Now, now," he chided. "No secrets in the organization."

"Yes," Phyllis pouted, "tell us, Jim. Walter can't have all the fun."

MARSH reddened. He had admired Phyllis Hunter for years. From the first, he had never quite been able to figure her out. Why did she so often go out of her way to bait him?

"Please forget it," he begged. "Just a little bet between Jim and myself."

"It's not the bet that's worth mentioning," Jim Garfield said. "It's the way he won it. How many people do you know who can read a sound track?"

"Read——" Phyllis gasped. "You mean—without a speaker?"

"Right," Jim said. "And to prove that Walter's a whizz I'll tell you why he's going to eat a free steak."

Marsh lapsed into silence. Nothing would stop Jim Garfield until the story was told.

"And that business about the Alaskan scene convinced me," Garfield finished. "I've never seen anything like it."

"But what possible *good* can it do?" she said. "Unless Mr. Marsh is getting to the state where he can't even stand sound."

Her father shot her a warning glance but it was too late.

"My idea exactly, Miss Hunter." Walter Marsh stood up. "Some sounds annoy me a great deal. If you'll excuse me, I'll leave."

He turned and left the table.

Phyllis half rose, then sank down again, bewilderment on her face.

"Why the *poor* child," she said. "He's easily hurt, isn't he?"

Rex Hunter winced.

"You've been after him pretty steadily for a long time now," he said quietly. "He may be easy-going, but you'll see a different side of Walter Marsh from now on. The completely frozen side."

"As if I cared," the girl snapped. "Let him sulk if he wants to."

The waiter came and, as Jim Garfield ordered, Phyllis drew out her compact hurriedly. With the mirror she could see Marsh's back as he left the restaurant. Then she caught her father staring at her, a steady grin on his face. She dropped the compact hurriedly into the bag once more.

"These silent men are hard to get around, aren't they, kid?" he said. "You're mother chased me for months before I caught her."

PETER FALLOW stepped from the car, tossed away a cigar butt and climbed the broad steps to the entrance of the *Talking News* building. He had orders to see Rex Hunter at six-thirty. Fallow never missed a date by more than half a minute, nor did more than that amount of time ever pass without a cigar between his thin lips. He adjusted his hat carefully, made a mechanical gesture to brush his coat lapels, and rang the night bell. Somewhere in the darkening hall he heard a bell ring clearly.

As he waited, Fallow lighted a fresh cigar and checked the address with the notebook he drew from his pocket.

"*Talking News*, 1145 Lockwood," he mumbled. "Right place, all right."

He rang again, then turned toward George Wicker, his companion, who waited in the coupe.

"Can't get a rise out of 'em," he called.

Wicker, a dark-faced, slightly plump young man with a scarred lip, grinned from behind the wheel.

"If at first you don't succeed," he yodeled. "Try it again, Fallow."

Fallow applied his thumb to his nose and then to the bell again. He left it there for several seconds.

Suddenly he stiffened. The shadow of a man was visible against the frosted glass of an inner window. Then it vanished. Fallow had that sixth sense that tells a man when something is amiss. He knocked loudly against the plate glass door, then pushed against it. To his surprise the door opened. He stepped inside quickly, his hand sinking into his right pocket. He moved along the carpeted hall on his toes, fingers tight on the grip of his automatic.

Somewhere ahead of him a door slammed.

Fallow moved on. At the far end of the building, the hall turned right to a small door at the side wall. That door was just closing. Fallow, sure now that something was wrong, started to run. He reached the door, pushed it open and stepped out into a small flower-garden. A high wall hid the alley. Fallow ran along the flag-stone path, reached the gate and pushed it open.

He started to run into the alley, then crouched flat against the wall. A dark sedan roared past him, throwing gravel into his face. The wheels missed him by inches. Before he could regain his balance, the car careened into the street on two wheels.

He had one good look at the man behind the wheel, and he was sure that he'd recognize that face again if he ever saw it.

Fallow wiped his forehead and retraced his footsteps into the studio. He had first seen the shadow in an office toward the front of the building. He reached the door, and read the legend aloud.

Rex Hunter.

Fallow frowned.

"Now that's funny—damned funny."

He wasn't knocking any more. He twisted the knob and walked in.

GEORGE WICKER grew tired of waiting in the car. He climbed wearily from behind the wheel, adjusted his trousers to a less binding position and ambled up the steps. He reached the door as Peter Fallow shot through it. Fallow's face was twisted with anger.

"We got business for ourselves this time," he said. "Real business. There's a dead man lying across the desk in there. I think it's Rex Hunter."

"Cripes!" Wicker's face turned an ugly red.

"Cripes is right," Fallow said sourly. "And I let the murderer walk out right under my nose. He damned near killed me too. Wait till I get my hands on him."

WALTER MARSH was aware of a dull pounding in his head. He groaned, rolled over and sat up. He moistened his lips with his tongue. With his hand he tried to rub away the pain, but it came again, pounding through his entire nervous system.

He passed his hand over his eyes. Although they were wide open, he couldn't see.

Yet there was something.

A fleeting mass of light passed across his eyeballs. First a flash of bright red, and a roar in his ears as though a comet were flashing past him. Then a low crackling sound, and more flashes, this time, pink and yellow in quick succession.

He shook his head violently from side to side, trying to regain some feeling or movement that was familiar. It was useless.

From the texture under his finger tips, he knew that he was lying in deep grass. He felt the grass between his fingers. His body was stretched out on the side of a steep slope.

Marsh leaned back slowly, arm over his eyes, and everything was silent. Dead silent. The lights continued to flash, playing like rainbows across the inner side of his eye balls.

"Can't understand," he murmered. "Rex dead—hit on the head . . . Can't —understand?"

He didn't attempt to move again for a long time. The lights continued to flash, even though his eyes were covered. He removed the hand from them. Once, when he moved his arm quickly, he was sure that a quick shower of yellow sparks arose. He had brushed his fingers across a pebble, sending it scuttling downward. He could feel that —yet not see it.

Everything he felt with his hands was normal. Yet he saw or heard nothing that he could understand. With his hand away from his eyes, a series of popping sounds exploded in his eardrums. He covered his eyes and the sounds stopped.

Puzzled, he sat up again, and repeated the performance a number of times, each time with the same result.

It was evident that he had undergone a shock that had unbalanced him in some manner. Although he could see lights, evidently he was not actually seeing them. At least not with his eyes. He saw the light even though his eyes were closed.

Still, those sounds.

"Maybe," he said. "It's just poss ——"

He placed two fingers tightly inside his ears, shutting off all chance of hearing.

At once the lights went out.

No longer could he see, but the jumbled sounds kept coming through. So many sounds that he could make no sense from them.

"Got to get out of here." He stumbled to his feet and a flash of red and yellow burst from below him as he slipped forward and fell into the bottom of the ditch. He lay panting, frightened.

Gradually the new world he was in seemed to come to life. If the lights and sounds he had experienced before had bewildered him, now the strain was terrible. Lying flat on his back, Marsh made no attempt to move. He was too exhausted, too bewildered.

GRADUALLY his ear-drums became accustomed to the noise, and his brain started to sort out the colored images that came and went in his new field of vision.

It was as though a silent symphony started to play, and color instead of music came to him. First the low, steady vibration of deep purple and blood red, giving away slowly to little jagged lines of yellow, green and lighter shades. Occasionally, he was startled by flashes of solid color or flying sparks that blotted out everything, and were gone.

During all this explosion of color, the sounds that came to him grew more and more powerful. Sounds that could be sorted into thousands of vibrations. Whistles, the roar of the surf, the steady pounding of a hammer. The sounds grew and grew in cresendo, at first tiny, like the sound of a flute, gradually louder as other tones added themselves, until at last he had to hold both hands over his eyes and blot out the roaring, upheaval of noise in his head.

Still, Walter Marsh had no clear understanding of what had happened. He got to his feet. As he moved forward struggling up a steep incline, he saw more sparks and heard new sounds. The quick flash of red accompanied by an exploding rocket.

Could he be dead? Was this the new way of life beyond the ken of men?

His feet struck something smooth and he walked more easily. Now his feet sent up a steady shower of green at every step.

Another flash of light and another rocket, crashing closer to him this time. Grimly he moved forward, both hands outstretched before him.

Then his eyes caught a rocket flash as it slowed down and seemed to move slowly past him. It returned, pausing in front of him. There came a steady sputtering of green light, blotting out the rest, vibrating with color. The sounds in his ears were regular—like the noise of a telegraph key sending a single word over and over.

Then something familiar, the first thing Walter Marsh had yet understood, flashed across his line of vision.

The wavering, black line of a movie sound track.

"What's wrong, mister? Can't you see?"

Marsh uttered a cry of relief. At last, when he had given up hope of ever finding a thing he could grasp, he knew what had happened.

The track quivered and pulsated amid the color that was in his eyes.

He didn't hear the voice.

There was no sound to it.

He read it. Read it from the tiny sound-line that came into that field of color.

"I'm—I'm blind," he managed to cry out. "An—accident . . . "

He couldn't hear his own voice, but he could see it.

"I'm—I'm blind . . . "

It was all there, recorded momentarily amid the mass of light. A single, wriggling line of black. A line that he had learned to read years ago.

"We'd better get off the road." There was a person standing before him, he knew. "I'll give you a lift. Where are

you going? I'll take you there."

Marsh read the line of sound again, but he didn't dare tell the truth. He couldn't tell anyone the truth.

But he knew now.

"I'd like to get back into town," he said. "*Talking News* studio."

His own voice, and the answer was visible almost at once.

"Let me help you into the car." A strong hand on his arm. He stumbled toward the exploding mass of green light, struck something that caused a smaller shower of yellow, and climbed into a car.

"What the hell happened?"

Marsh leaned forward, knowing he must interrupt every word and answer each question carefully. He couldn't afford to slip now, at least not for the present.

"Car hit me and I was stunned," he said. "I'll be all right."

HE SAT very still, waiting, wondering. He had to get back. He remembered now: the film—Rex Hunter dead—he was sure they had stolen the film.

What chance did he have? He had never seen the person who attacked him. He'd have to make sure the other film was safe, that Rex's death did not go unavenged.

He had a new, a baffling problem to face.

He would be able to interpret the lights, the sound track, by studying them carefully. Much of it he already knew. How could he learn to understand the sounds in his ears? The sounds that came from what he *saw?*

He remembered that, as he faced the man on the road, there had been a tiny series of high pitch notes, like repeated blasts on a tiny whistle. A person's eyes were bright. Perhaps a bright blue light would give that sound. He'd remember that. The next time he faced anyone, he'd listen. That would be a way of telling when he was looking at another man or woman. Perhaps the sounds would vary in pitch. He might even learn to tell *who* he faced.

The rockets, Marsh thought, were automobiles passing him on the highway. Their motors grew noisy, then faded quickly in a distance. That caused the sudden flash of light, varying in shade according to the speed at which they passed. The crashing, sputtering sounds were caused by the colors of those same cars.

He had been stretched out in a ditch. At first it had been quiet, and the colors had been even and light. The sounds had risen until he could hardly stand the volume. Then the rockets (or cars) had passed in a steady stream.

Sunrise?

He had witnessed a sunrise, and the gradual growth of traffic along the road. He had struggled to his feet, climbed out of the ditch and moved across the road. The motorist had seen him and stopped, backed up and picked him up.

So excited was Marsh at deciphering this chain of events, that he almost forgot what was happening.

Not once since he entered the car had the sounds or the lights vanished. They varied from second to second, and gradually, because he was most familiar with the sound track, he managed to decipher an occasional color that recorded itself in his eyes.

The far-away quiver of a factory whistle—the widely arranged see-saw lines of a rumbling train.

His ears recorded a sound that went with every color.

The train, evidently passing across the road before them, sent out showers of sound that splashed his vision with deep purple. It's burnished steel and

painted freight cars sent a changing set of whistling noises into his ears. Then its whistle blew again, and he studied the wavery line once more, recognizing it at once.

He was conscious of that same tiny whistle sent by blinking eyes—and knew the driver was staring at him. Marsh wondered if it were man or woman. He couldn't be sure, although he felt it was the first. Marsh smiled.

"I wonder if you really want to return to *Talking News?*" the unsteady sound-track asked.

Marsh frowned, then nodded.

"If you don't mind," he said.

The same warning signal of the flashing eyes, perhaps a little louder, then a new tone. Marsh was to learn the sound that white teeth made when a grin parted a person's lips. Then a little flash of pink light as the driver chuckled.

"Incidentally," the sound track said, "I haven't introduced myself. I'm Pete Fallow of the F. B. I. *I'm taking you in for the murder of Rex Walters!*

THERE was a thick rug on the floor of the hospital waiting room, with green lines woven from end to end. Up and down these lines Pete Fallow moved in an endless march. The cigar hung forgotten between his lips. He stopped once in a while to fire another sentence toward the pair who watched him impatiently from the divan.

"Either the guy is blind, or he's a good actor," Fallow said sourly. "And no more cracks about *my* sight. He's the one I'm after, all right."

Phyllis Hunter, dry-eyed but looking as though she hadn't slept for a week, stared at Jim Garfield. Garfield sat thoughtfully, his knees crossed, crease carefully smoothed in his trousers.

"We can't reason with him," he nodded toward Fallow. "Better leave him alone. He'll come to his senses eventually."

"But—Walter didn't kill Dad. We *know* that."

Fallow stopped his pacing and slumped down wearily at her side.

"And just how do you know it, lady?"

Phyllis shrugged.

"Walter Marsh didn't want that film," she said stubbornly. "He could have made a dozen copies of it. Why would he shoot Dad and run away with something he could have stolen without any of us knowing?"

Fallow shook his head.

"There was some other reason," he said. "Marsh got rid of your father, all right. He's the boy I saw drive away when I ran out the back way. Damned near killed me."

"But——"

"No buts about it, lady. The doctor's taking a good look at Marsh right now. When he's finished, I'm taking him down town for a nice question and answer party."

A nurse appeared at the inner door. As she stood there, waiting for Fallow to stop talking, Phyllis could see Walter Marsh leaning on an intern's arm, walking slowly toward them. Phyllis was on her feet in an instant. Garfield arose more slowly. The nurse drew Pete Fallow to one side.

"You are to let Mr. Marsh go free for the time being. He's in no condition, to be hounded."

"You mean the Doc said he ain't to be arrested?" Fallow demanded.

The nurse's fingers closed tightly on his arm.

"Be quiet," she said sternly. "The poor boy has suffered a terrible shock. There isn't a doctor in the hospital who understands just what happened to him. I believe he'll work it out by himself in a few weeks. There's nothing we can

do. Meanwhile you are to let him go free."

Fallow swore under his breath.

"Playing nurse-maid to a blind man, and I'm not even sure he's blind."

The nurse's lips closed tightly.

"Doctor Hallgrove wants to talk with you," she said. "Mr. Marsh can return home with his friends. I think you'll be glad to leave Mr. Marsh alone when you know the entire story."

FALLOW followed the nurse through the door into the room Marsh had just left. He tried to avoid Marsh, but Walter put a hand on Pete Fallow's shoulder.

"You're Peter Fallow, aren't you?" His voice was faltering.

Fallow stared into Marsh's eyes, blinked a couple of times and caught himself.

"That's all right," Marsh went on. "You are the same man who picked me up on the road. I know about Rex's death. You'll have my co-operation. Let me know when I can help you."

Fallow gulped.

"How in hell——"

"—can I tell you who you are when I'm blind?" Marsh smiled a little sadly. "I've learned the sound your eyes make," he said. "They're bright blue the nurse says. Blue makes a high pitched whistle. I'll have no trouble recognizing you from now on."

Fallow stepped back, amazed.

"See what I mean," the nurse said, and led the detective into an inner office.

Behind him, Marsh chuckled. Fallow didn't hear the conversation that followed because the door closed and he faced Doctor Hallgrove.

WALTER MARSH had straightened out a number of things during the hours he had talked with Doctor Hallgrove. A case of crossed wires, Hallgrove called it, and tried to explain.

Marsh was with Phyllis and Jim Garfield now. They were talking to him eagerly, yet slowly, realizing how difficult communication was, and hoping to help him in every way possible.

Marsh pushed Phyllis away gently when she tried to lead him down the steps to the car. Garfield, knowing the blind man would resent any intrusion into his strange new world, talked as matter of factly was possible, ignoring the difficulty Marsh had in finding his way into the car.

"I have the only key to the film morgue," Marsh said, when they were seated in the car. "It's hidden at the studio. I imagine the F. B. I. will ask for it. I'll let them in."

An awkward silence followed. Garfield started the car and they slipped out into traffic.

"Probably ought to lock that film in a vault somewhere," Garfield suggested.

Marsh nodded.

"Let me know what they want. I'll be on hand when they ask for it."

He wondered if they'd try to kill him now, because he knew how to get at the second film. Probably not. There was no way for an outsider to know that a copy had been made.

"Phyllis." Marsh's voice was low, a trifle bitter.

Her hand touched his arm.

"I—I want you to know I didn't kill Rex," Marsh said.

He felt her shiver slightly and take away her hand. When it returned, her fingers were moist. She was crying.

The girl's voice on the sound track was uncertain, quivering.

"I know you didn't, Walter."

Marsh tried to unravel the sounds and colors he was receiving.

The car stopped often at intersections. He knew when the traffic halted and when the lights changed. Green,

amber and red produced steady, widely varied sound signals and the sound of moving cars produced simple, easily understood color signals.

"It's odd," he said finally. "Fallow working on the case, and finding me out there in the country. God knows how I got there."

He was aware of movement at his right and wavering, unsteady lines on his vision track. It was the voice of the sobbing girl.

"I'm sorry, Phyllis," he added quickly. "I don't mean to sound matter-of-fact. I know what Rex's death meant to you."

"Fallow says you killed him."

Movement of color and the blinking, low-pitched sound of Phyllis' brown eyes as she stared into his. The steady sobbing on the sound track.

"Mr. Fallow," she said uncertainly, "was at the studio. He saw a man escape through the rear door. He ran after him and saw him drive away. He said the man was you. When he went back, Dad——" the line broke.

He reached out carefully and touched her arm.

"I—didn't . . . "

"I know," she said. "I told him he was mistaken. He found the car, the one you drove away in. It was wrecked in the ditch near where he found you, Walter. I can't believe you did it, but who—who?"

MARSH was stunned. He turned to Jim Garfield, and Garfield's voice track read:

"I know, Marsh, but it points your way. We'll do the best we can."

"So I'm left free until I'm trapped," he said bitterly. "Is that why Fallow left you with me?"

Phyllis' sobbing stopped.

"Oh, Walter, no!" Blankness, then more words: "We—that is Jim—thought you should stay with him until you can get around alone. The real murderer will turn up, I know he will."

Marsh's lips tightened in a straight, bloodless line.

"You have my apartment number, Jim," he said. "I'd walk there if I could. I'd appreciate it if you drove me there now."

"But, Walter——"

"Unless,' Marsh asked sarcastically, "Fallow *did* ask you to keep an eye on me. In that case I'll have to stay with you. A blind man hasn't much choice."

No more words. His sudden bitterness silenced them both. Marsh caught the increased light and sound as the car picked up speed and made several turns. He stared straight ahead, his mind in a turmoil. Rex Hunter had been the finest friend he had ever had. They thought he murdered Rex. One thing he was sure of. Hunter was dead when he went into the office. *He had not killed him.*

The flashing lights stopped and the idling engine sent popping green across his path of vision.

"Can I help you to the door?"

It was Garfield's voice, low, expressionless.

"I'll make it," Marsh said grimly. He knew that Phyllis was out of the car and holding the door for him.

He climbed out, felt her fingers on his arm and drew away from her.

"Tell Fallow I can't go very far this way," he said. "I wondered why your dislike for me could turn to friendship so easily, Miss Hunter. Don't worry. Fallow can pick me up any time."

He turned and started across the walk.

He knew the car was moving away because the flashing comet-light passed across his eyes. Although he knew where the steps were, he stumbled a little as his foot hit the first one and

green sparks flew up in a shower.

Ahead of him the red bricks of the building sent a steady roaring sound into his brain.

"Crossed wires," he whispered to himself and started groping his way upward. "Sound and light. Murderer and murdered. You've got two problems now, Walt. Not much help for you, not until you get the new scoreboard figured out."

PETE FALLOW climbed out of the car, found Marsh's bell and pressed his finger tightly against it. He waited, adjusting his coat collar and changing cigars. The buzzer sounded and Fallow stepped inside the dark apartment hall. The building was a six-story affair with elevator service. From the row of mail boxes, Fallow found that Marsh's apartment was on the third floor. He entered the automatic elevator and pressed the button marked 3.

Marsh met him at the door. Three days had passed since the morning he had awakened in the ditch. In those three days he had learned a great deal.

"Mr. Fallow," Marsh said, holding the door open. "Come in."

Fallow gulped.

"My blue eyes give me away again, huh?"

Marsh laughed and led him inside. He pointed to a chair near the window.

"Sit down. No, I'm not exactly blind, Fallow. In fact with a little more practice, I think I'll *see* as well as the rest of you. Have to adjust myself. If I'm to be a fugitive from the law, I'll have to get around pretty fast."

His last words were bitter. Fallow frowned thoughtfully. He found himself liking Marsh. Perhaps part of it was pity.

"Suppose I told you that so far as Rex Hunter is concerned, I have evidence that may clear you?" Fallow said.

Marsh's eyebrows moved upward.

"You're not setting another trap?"

Fallow grinned.

"Look, Marsh," he said. "Let's get this thing straight. I know what you're up against. Just the same, if you murdered Hunter, I'd get you if you were blind and had no legs or arms. I've been talking to Miss Hunter."

Marsh started.

"Has Phyllis been mixed——"

"Let me finish," Fallow said shortly. "Miss Hunter is a peach. She and Garfield have been on my trail ever since they dropped you here at the apartment. They realize you have to fight this thing out alone. However, Miss Hunter tells me that her father gave you instructions to copy that film, deliver the original to him and lock the copy in the morgue. Is that right?"

Marsh nodded and Fallow continued.

"Whoever killed Hunter was after the film, and the film alone. None of his personal valuables was touched. I must have been mistaken when I thought I saw you drive that car away."

The room had grown warm. Marsh arose, walked to the window and pushed it up a foot or two. He stood very still, his back to Fallow.

"That's the funny part of it," he said. "I was driving that car."

FALLOW sprang to his feet.

"You admit——"

"Nothing." Marsh turned, a puzzled, almost pleading expression on his face. "Something hit my head. I went crazy. I came around and found myself unable to think clearly. I heard someone ringing the front bell and I thought I had to run away. I went out the back way, found the car there and got in. The engine was running. I drove out of the alley and kept on driving until all that crazy fear had gone out of me. I can't remember beyond that until I

awakened and — and my senses were——"

Fallow nodded eagerly.

"You think that car was left there for an escape? That you stumbled across it?"

Marsh looked puzzled.

"How else?"

Fallow grunted.

"Yeah, how else?" he said. "Well, I'll tell you. I traced the license and found out the buggy belongs to a Japanese importer. He closed shop months ago and took his family to one of the inland camps. The car was supposed to be locked up. We broke into his house last night. Found about eight feet of film in a waste basket that I think might interest you."

"Go on."

"This film is locked up at the office," Fallow said evenly. "But Jim Garfield said you'd know all about it. It's a scene taken in Alaska. A couple of old settlers are standing in front of a store chewing the fat."

"Good lord!" Marsh said hoarsely. "That's the scene Jim tacked onto the Japanese film. But how——"

"That's what I want to know," Fallow said. "How did it get there? My guess is that Kari Mutso, the Jap I'm talking about, killed Hunter, then hid when you came in. Somehow that blow on the head crossed your wires. At the time I knocked on the front door, Kari Mutso sat tight in the closet, then escaped while I chased you into the alley. You grabbed his car, drove until you went out of your head and then got out and wandered around until you passed out. In all events, Mutso has the film."

"But," Marsh protested, "surely he can be caught?"

Fallow looked sour.

"His nibs, Kari Mutso, was smuggled aboard a fishing schooner last night, and left for parts unknown. I'd hazard a guess that a submarine was waiting off shore to take him to a safer spot, maybe Tokyo."

"About that film," Marsh suggested to Fallow before he left. "Do you want me to get it for you?"

Fallow gave the subject proper thought.

"It's safe where it is?"

Marsh nodded.

"Locked in a fire-proof and—I hope burglar-proof morgue. I have the only key and it's carefully hidden."

"Good," Fallow said. "I'll ask the chief when he plans to take it to Washington. We may as well leave it where it is until then. You can go down and get it when it's needed."

Marsh said he would; they exchanged a few more words and Fallow departed.

A WEEK had passed since Walter Marsh first struggled from the ditch and walked into a strange new world of nerve-shattering sound and color. In those few days he had become familiar with the signals his brain received. His earlier experience with reading sound tracks had a lot to do with this quick re-education.

Marsh forced himself to go out alone for hours. By walking the streets day after day, he picked up a certain knack of getting around that in some ways made him feel safer than the average pedestrian.

Exactly one week after Rex Hunter's death, Marsh stepped out of his apartment, pocketed his key and went grimly to work on the murder case. Until that time he had forced himself to think of nothing but himself. To concentrate on learning his new self.

Quite pleased, Marsh walked directly to the elevator, guided by a steady, low tone-beam caused by the dark ele-

vator door set into a light wall. He descended to the lobby and at once, two separate sets of blinking whistles warned him that two people were standing before the elevator door staring at him. He nodded, stepped to one side and said:

"Excuse me."

The lobby was familiar now. He knew every sound that the various shades of paint made. The dark desk was a low rumble. The peach walls were high-pitched and steady.

The rug sent up small patches of yellow sparks as his shoes rubbed against it. That was sound, transmitting itself into light. The desk-clerk's voice greeted him in wavery black lines.

"Good morning, Mr. Marsh. Going out?"

Marsh answered the greeting and went down the steps to the sidewalk. Here, he was also sure of himself.

The sidewalk sent up a steady, green shower of sparks as his shoes clicked lightly against it. Cars rushing by, pedestrians — all sent out their own color-patterns and sounds.

He reached the corner. Traffic was halted. He knew that, because the idling motors and the motionless cars made an entirely different group of sounds. The light was green. Red, amber, or green, he had learned the separate whistle of each color.

Marsh walked swiftly, dodging each pedestrian, chuckling at the various little sounds the colors of their eyes made. He was getting a huge kick out of the fact that, at last, he had conquered that first terrible fear within him.

He reached Lockwood street (he had counted the blocks carefully) and turned south. The studio exterior was of bright stucco. It stood out among the darker buildings of the neighborhood, sending forth a high-pitched sound-beam that Marsh could follow easily.

He approached the front door with mixed emotions.

He must face the staff, Rex's daughter, and Jim Garfield. Marsh wondered just how much blame still lay on his shoulders. Had Peter Fallow been telling the truth when he said Marsh was cleared?

"Walter!" Marsh stopped abruptly in the hall, Phyllis Hunter's voice weaving its signal in his eyes. "I didn't expect you. I—I——"

She was standing before him, and he knew that she was blinking rapidly, because of the unsteady signal her eyes made.

"I get around pretty well now," he said a little stiffly. "Thought I'd drop in and see how things were going."

HER hand was on his arm, shyly, as though she would draw it away if he gave any sign that it annoyed him. Marsh had longed to talk with her since that night he stumbled out of the car, blinded, sick with anger. He wanted to say that he was sorry and that he'd been a damn, unreasonable fool. Now he was so choked up that he couldn't say anything that made sense.

The girl drew him into her own office. She always kept a huge bowl of goldfish on the window sill. Now the darting red fish, the sun-sparkling bowl made a definite set of sounds that were proof of his surroundings.

She pushed him into a chair, pulled another one up close, and sat down. She started talking eagerly.

"Walter, please don't be angry with me."

"That's all right. We all make errors."

"But about Dad," Phyllis went on hurriedly. "Did Pete Fallow tell you about the Japanese importer?"

Marsh nodded. This was more like it. He had come for one purpose. The job of finding Rex's murderer had been going too slowly. He was ready now to do his part.

"I understand this Jap was supposed to have been hiding when Fallow came in?"

"Yes," Phyllis answered eagerly. "But, Walter, how did the man—Kari Mutso, that is—*know* about the film?

Marsh smiled, but there was no humor in the expression.

"That's the question that's puzzled me for a week," he said.

"Someone who works here must be in touch with Mutso. Otherwise, how did he know that I'd be taking the film to your father at the approximate time the murder happened?"

"Walter." He saw the little sound line widen into a gasp. "It—wouldn't be Jim?"

Marsh shook his head.

"Jim Garfield got into trouble the last time he was in Japan. They tossed him out of their country on his ear, and damned near drowned him. Fortunately he had sent his films home ahead of him. By the time Jim found a river boat to cling to, swam half a mile to a freighter and came home in rags, he didn't have much affection for the Japs. It isn't Jim. He hates their guts."

A sigh of relief.

"You thought Jim was one of the few people who knew about the film," Marsh said comfortingly. "I don't blame you for suspecting everyone."

"But—who else knew?"

"I don't know," Marsh said slowly. "You, your father, Jim Garfield and I. No, I'm afraid Mutso must have had another source of information."

He saw the quick flash of changing color as Phyllis stood up.

"They murdered Dad," she said in a steady voice. "But we've still got the film—at least a copy. They won't get that."

Marsh's eyes narrowed.

"No," he said. "They won't get that without killing me."

"MR. FALLOW," Marsh said into the phone. "I wonder if you're going to be busy this evening?"

"No," said the voice at the other end of the wire. "This is Marsh, isn't it? What's on your mind?"

Walter Marsh smiled.

"A trip to Kari Mutso's home," he said. "I'd hardly get that far alone. I'd like you to go along."

Fallow's voice was deeply interested.

"If you think you know anything I don't," he said. "I'll be damned glad to get your help."

Marsh denied any special knowledge.

"I just want to look around over there," he said.

"Look?"

Marsh chuckled.

"Can you pick me up here at the apartment about seven this evening?"

SHARPLY at seven o'clock, Pete Fallow halted before the apartment building. Marsh was already out front. He waited until Fallow's voice flashed into his vision screen, and hurried to the curb. The trip across town and down the hilly streets to the water front took forty minutes. Fallow stopped at last, rounded the car to help Marsh out, and found him already standing on the sidewalk.

"By golly," Fallow said with respect in his voice. "They can't hold you down, can they? You know how to get around."

Marsh shook his head.

"I'm not much good in the dark," he said. "Otherwise, I can get along if there's plenty of time, and someone to help me."

Fallow took his arm and they went up a sandy path. It was a dark, dismal neighborhood. The sounds and colors were low and some of them strange. As they walked along, Marsh recognized the purple sparks that fell around his feet as the sounds of his pants legs against high weeds. In a distance the wavery line of rolling surf registered on his vision screen.

Fallow let go of his hand and there came a wavery message of a key turning, the flash of an opening door. Once inside, Fallow turned his flashlight around the room and the beam of the light varied in sound as it moved close to Marsh and then away again.

"Don't quite know how this trip can do you any good, Marsh," Fallow said apologetically. "I've been over this ratty dump half a dozen times. Nothing but a big shack, two floors high."

He had turned around and was looking at Marsh.

"This Kari Mutso?" Marsh asked. "You say he returned and was evidently living here last week when he got the film and left in a hurry?"

"Yeah, that's as near as we can figure out," Fallow said. "The place was in pretty good shape. Half a dozen people in the neighborhood said Mutso had been around for quite a while. We checked with a little Italian down by the wharfs. He said Mutso went out on a fishing boat the night Hunter was killed. He hasn't come back since."

Marsh moved slowly around the room. He felt the top of a small desk that was in the corner of the room, then went through the drawers.

"Ain't nothing around that will help you," Fallow said. "We found that film in the kitchen. Cut off and tossed in a grocery bag."

Marsh took a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his hands. They were rough and gritty with dust.

"I guess I'm on the wrong track," he said. "I was feeling pretty good. It made me sure of myself and I decided to get Hunter's murderer right away. Guess I'm not so smart as I thought. Shall we go?"

Fallow chuckled.

"You leave the detective work to me, Mr. Marsh," he said. "I'm paid for it."

Marsh started moving toward the door. Suddenly he stumbled and fell directly into Pete Fallow's arms. He swore.

"What the dickens," Fallow protested. "I thought you could *see* me. Guess you'd better take it easy for a while, before you run into a car or something, walking around blind this way."

Marsh apologized. He didn't understand what had happened. Fallow had been facing him, and yet he hadn't caught any of the signals.

Was it possible that the few senses he had left were failing?

JIM GARFIELD was in the projection room when Marsh entered. Jim left the scanning machine, came over and sat down beside Marsh. They were silent for some time. Finally Garfield broke the silence.

"It's been a week now, Walt, and they haven't got poor Rex's murderer."

Marsh didn't answer. He was trying to find some small point, some clue that would point to anyone but Jim Garfield. Jim just wasn't a murderer. Garfield had no more reason for killing Rex than he, Marsh, did. Jim could have made a hundred copies of the film during the past few months, or he could have stolen the original and no one would have suspected. It had to be an outsider.

Or did it?

There was one possibility none of

them had considered. Jim could have had another reason for killing Rex. A reason entirely aside from the obvious one. Jim knew Rex would be alone. He knew the chance would be perfect.

"I'm damned if I know what to say," Marsh sighed. Then for a reason that wasn't even clear to him at the time, he added: "I'm going to get that film out of the morgue tonight. I want it locked in a bank vault or turned over to the F.B.I at once. I don't think any of us should take further chances with it."

Garfield stood up quickly.

"That still isn't finding Rex's murderer. Marsh, just what the hell *were* you doing that night? Fallow wasn't kidding when he said you drove away in the car."

Marsh felt his temper start to rise. He stood up, facing Jim, cold irony in his voice.

"The only thing I'm sure about that night, Jim," he said, "is that Pete Fallow made a mistake when he said that car belonged to Kari Mutso. I've driven that car before, Jim. It belongs to you!"

WHY Jim Garfield didn't lose his temper, Marsh wasn't sure. It *had* been Jim's car. He had known that even in his crazed fright. He had kept it as an ace card from the first. Now his own foolish temper had given him away.

"So what?" Garfield's voice recorded itself evenly.

"Damned if I know," Marsh said. "But I'll find out. I came around after that crack on the head and the first thing I thought of was to run away. I ran out the side door and into the alley. Your car was there and the motor was running. I climbed in and almost ran Fallow down getting away."

"And you think Fallow was ignorant enough to trace the wrong license number? To find the wrong owner?"

Marsh frowned.

"No—I don't," he said, and wondered just what in hell he did think.

Garfield's voice didn't register for some time. Then it was clipped and short.

"Well, Sherlock, I've as much right asking questions as you have around here. You can go straight to hell."

Sparks flew from the rug in the narrow aisle. Sudden explosions of light and the darkness again, darkness like night. Marsh was left alone in the darkened studio. He sat alone bewildered. Whether the lights were on or off made little difference. He couldn't see them anyhow.

AT FIVE in the afternoon, George Wicker, Pete Fallow's companion, called Marsh at the studio. Phyllis came to the projection room for him.

"He says it's urgent," she said. "Mr. Fallow is busy somewhere on work concerning that Kari Mutso."

Marsh went into Rex Hunter's office to take the call.

"Hello—Mr. Marsh?"

Marsh said it was.

The chief wanted Mr. Marsh to get that Japanese film ready and he, George Wicker, would pick it up late in the evening. He was going to be busy until after nine, and Fallow was somewhere down around the water front looking for the Jap. Seems that someone had seen Mutso around town again. Would Mr. Marsh get the film out of the morgue and have it ready at nine-thirty?

Marsh said he would, and George Wicker thanked him and hung up.

Marsh thought it over. There were a few points he hadn't cleaned up yet on the murder of Rex Hunter. Only a few.

He went into Phyllis' office. He could

tell by the blinking tone of her eyes, the flash of her teeth, that she was staring at him as he came in. She was smiling.

He went straight to her desk and leaned over it.

"That's a pretty jade pin you're wearing," he said with a smile.

Phyllis' eyes showed how the remark had startled her, and Marsh laughed aloud.

"The pin," he said, "makes a nice steady whistle. The sound that green always produces."

She relaxed then, laughing at herself.

"For an instant I almost thought you could see it," she said. "What did Mr. Wicker want?"

Marsh didn't answer directly.

"Could you stay for a while this evening?" he asked. "I'm turning that film over to the F. B. I. I'd like you to witness the act."

"Surely." Her voice, at first cool, was suddenly filled with a torrent of emotion. "Walter, what are we going to do? We can't go on without knowing about Dad. Without doing something for you. I—I . . ."

"You're sorry we fought so often—before?" Marsh asked softly.

"I'm sorry I've been a little fool most of my life," she whispered. "Dad used to say I was cruel just for the love of seeing people run away from me. He was right. But now—Walter—I'm fed up with myself."

Marsh leaned far over the desk.

"*I'm* not fed up," he said. "I'm just getting started."

He planted a firm kiss on her lips, turned and walked swiftly out of the office. He didn't have to get any sound signals to know that his own face was a fiery red.

THE HALL was dark. Marsh made sure that not even the single night-light was burning when he came into the building at eight-thirty. He had gone out for an hour and returned in time to open the morgue before George Wicker appeared.

He knew that Phyllis was in her office, because the office light signaled him clearly. He thought that Jim Garfield was in. Jim's light was on as he passed. Marsh walked as quietly as possible on the deep hall-carpet. He entered the projection room, moved carefully down the aisle and sat in the darkness.

It was important that every nerve be alert.

He sat motionless for half an hour. Once, he felt sure that someone had opened the door behind him. A tiny flash of light, then darkness again.

At last he arose. He was startled to find that perspiration was standing out on his forehead. That his fingers were moist. That wouldn't do. His nerves had to be calm.

The place where he had hidden the morgue key was as simple as it was safe. Marsh felt his way to the rear of the room. He counted down eight rows and over toward the scanning machine ten chairs. He slipped his fingers under the chair, felt up under the torn upholstery and drew out the key.

All was silent now. There were only the sparks that he himself made in walking across the floor and brushing against objects.

The morgue had two doors, both opened by the same key. He found the first one, opened it quickly and stepped into a cool, short hall. It was carpetless and his shoes clicked loudly, making wide, green sparks as they moved. The second floor. He took a deep breath and went in.

The morgue was a long, narrow room. The cement walls were reinforced by three inches of steel. Air-conditioning

made the place cool and slightly moist.

Echoes were loud and his eyes caught shattering flashes of bright colors as he moved about among the film containers. There were two racks against the walls. On these racks, large film cans had been stacked.

He knew exactly where to go to the Jap film, but he had no intention of giving himself away that easily.

Marsh went to the far end of the morgue. He stood still in the darkness, as though deep in thought. Then he moved close to one wall and started moving the cans about. The noise produced violent light-signals in his eyes. There was no *actual* light in the morgue. Therefore, no *sound* to register in his ears.

Suddenly a small flash of green sparks caught his eye.

EVERY nerve in his body snapped to attention. Casually, slowly, he turned away from the rack and went to the opposite wall.

Those green sparks were caused by a shoe hitting the cement in the outer hall!

Marsh waited.

"The fool," he thought. "I'm not blind. Why doesn't he, or she, realize that?"

Still, he was puzzled by something.

He received no other signal than the green sparks. They were spaced cautiously, far apart, indicating that the person was coming toward him slowly.

Marsh waited for the series of light dashes that the human eye produced.

Green flash—green flash—then faster, running.

Marsh dodged to one side and a violent orange flame spread out close to his elbow. Some one had struck at him. He had dodged just in time, and the object had hit one of the film cans, producing the orange light.

In that instant Marsh whipped around, reached swiftly into his pocket and brought out a stocking. In the foot of the sock was a heavy plaster book-end.

The green flashes withdrew swiftly.

Now the eye signals were visible.

Long, almost uninterrupted whistles came from the eyes. Someone there in the dark, ready to strike again, straining his eyes to see.

Marsh knew then it would be easy. He had every advantage over a normal person. The other could see nothing in the dark.

Marsh could see every sound.

Green flashed, close. The eye signal was stronger. Then the high pitched tone of teeth—white teeth, visible, probably, between snarling lips.

Marsh moved ever so slightly and a wide vibrating black line appeared in his vision screen.

He knew that vibration. *A gunshot!*

He fell forward, rolling over quickly as he did so, then came to his feet silently.

The room was quiet. The green flashes came, not two feet from him. The signal of the eyes turned straight at him. The beam of sound was close—too close. Marsh brought the sock with the plaster book-end down with all his weight. A violent shower of red sparks.

"Uh-h-h-h——"

The broken moan gave Marsh a clear impression of his attacker. His mind was suddenly drunk with relief that the person stretched on the dark floor was the one he expected it to be.

Pete Fallow wouldn't have to spend any more time searching for Kari Mutso.

Fallow was out cold on the floor of the dark morgue!

THEY were seated in Rex Hunter's office. Phyllis Hunter was on the

arm of Marsh's chair. Jim was behind Rex's desk, legs across the edge of it, completely relaxed for the first time since Hunter's death.

"I don't know whether Fallow was ever really connected with the F. B. I. He had cleverly forged credentials, but I'm quite sure he'd never fool anyone in authority for any length of time. Remember that Rex *said* he'd call the F. B. I. My guess is that he never had time to; that Fallow shot him before he put the call through. Fallow heard through private sources that we had the film."

"But how—where?" Phyllis protested. "Neither Jim nor I——"

"No," Marsh admitted. "Fallow was connected in some way with Japanese spies."

"Kari Mutso?" Garfield asked.

Marsh chuckled.

"Pete Fallow *was* Kari Mutso," he said.

Garfield's feet slipped from the desk and hit the floor with a bang.

"Impossible!"

"It's true, Marsh insisted. "I don't know just when I started to suspect Fallow. He seemed all right. But look at it this way: I refused to believe either you or Phyllis was responsible for Rex's death.

"That left only Fallow. Fallow must have known about the film. We placed all our trust in him. The story wasn't in the papers. Fallow made sure it didn't get out to the public.

"He came here late in the afternoon. He got into Rex's office, killed him to prevent Rex from getting in touch with the real F. B. I."

"But how can you be sure?" Phyllis asked.

"Because I called the local F. B. I. office this afternoon. They said they had no one working for them by the name of Fallow. He's a private detective, and not a very good one."

"George Wicker?"

"Works for Fallow, and isn't as bright as Fallow. Wicker was completely fooled. He didn't know why they came here, or that Fallow had already made one visit that afternoon to the studio.

"Fallow thought he might pin the murder on the person who ran out and escaped in the car. Of course I was so groggy that I left the film can laying there. He must have slipped it into a closet and came back for it late in the evening."

"But Kari Mutso?" Garfield protested. "Fallow chased around after him for a week."

"He pretended to," Marsh admitted. "What Fallow actually did was this: He saw that everyone was against him when he tried to pin the murder on me. He had already turned the film over to certain spies. We'll never know them or where the film went.

"After he saw the condition I was in, and learned that there was a copy of the film, he had to treat me right and wait for a chance to get at the copy. He made up the story of Kari Mutso and said he traced your car to the Jap."

Garfield swore.

"I'm to blame for a lot of the trouble," he admitted. "I know I had left the car out back. The motor was running while I came into the dark-room; I forgot a couple of negatives I'd made that afternoon. I must have been in the dark-room when you rushed out and drove away."

"That explains it," Marsh agreed. "Fallow told the story about Kari Mutso to satisfy us. If we'd grown curious and reported to the police or the F. B. I., he'd have been in trouble. As it was he had to pay heavily to get the doctor who examined Rex to sign a certificate of natural death."

Phyllis gasped in astonishment.

"I checked up on that to," Marsh admitted. "The good doctor is in jail at this moment. Fallow took me to Mutso's place. He said Mutso had been living there and yet the place was covered with dust. Ruined a handkerchief just wiping my hands."

"But you went into the morgue when you knew he would follow?"

It was Phyllis, her voice filled with admiration.

"I had to do that," Marsh said gravely. "Remember that I *thought* it was Fallow. Wicker called and said *he* would pick up the film. It was then that I had time to check with the F. B. I. and the doctor. I went home and prepared a little weapon."

HE drew the sock filled with broken plaster from his pocket and tossed it on the desk.

"When I entered the morgue, I couldn't be positive it was Fallow. I had to *prove* he was the one who stole the film. I knew Fallow had the film because I had convinced myself that Kari Musto didn't exist, and yet Fallow brought that Alaskan scene to us, claiming he found it in Mutso's house.

"When those footsteps came toward me, I was waiting for certain signals. I even had a horrible fear for a minute that I might get more than I asked for."

Phyllis clasped her hand over the jade pin she was wearing.

"Yes," Marsh said calmly. "It *could* have been you, or Jim. I had to take that chance. Then something happened that made me sure it was Fallow. After that I waited my chance and got him. The poor sap didn't have a chance in the dark."

"But—what? What made you sure it was he?"

"When Fallow and I were in the house down near the waterfront, I ran into him in the dark. He was quite surprised. He made a remark about thinking I could *see* him. I could have seen him if he hadn't closed his eyes. I thought about it afterward, and decided that Fallow, standing there in the dark, had deliberately closed his eyes to see if I had any other way of recognizing him. He tried the same trick when he first entered the morgue. However, he forgot that I could follow every step, by the sparks of sound from his shoes."

Phyllis sighed.

"I still think you took too many chances," she said.

Marsh had saved his biggest triumph for this moment. He turned in his chair and smiled at the girl.

"Phyllis," he said, "I think the blue dress, the new hair-do and that tearful expression in your eyes are the most wonderful things I've ever seen."

He put both arms around her, drew her down to him and kissed her lips.

"No blind man in the world could find a pair of lips that fast!" Jim Garfield shouted.

Phyllis tried to struggle, to break away so that she might question him. Marsh held her tightly, staring straight into her eyes.

Finally she managed to break loose and there was complete happiness in her voice.

"Walter Marsh, the devil was shining in those eyes just then. You—you can see—really!"

Marsh chuckled.

"It must have been the excitement in there," he said. "Alone with Fallow, fighting for my life, I realized that the lights and the sounds in my head were ended. I struggled around after I knocked Fallow down, but I was as blind as he was. Bumped my head half a dozen times trying to get out."

"And when you got to daylight?" Garfield asked.

"Why—I could see again," Marsh said. "And from now on, I'm going to keep both eyes on a certain girl who used to cause her father no end of worry."

"Poor Dad," Phyllis said, and there were tears in her eyes. "I'll bet he'd be happy to know how things turned out."

Marsh nodded silently and the girl stared out the window, a far-away look in her eyes.

"Dad once said that I came from the same mold that mother did. I wonder if, where they are now, he still thinks that."

Marsh held her close.

"If he doesn't," he said slowly, "Im ashamed of him."

VIGNETTES OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

By ALEXANDER BLADE

Brahe

He might have been the greatest of all astronomers, but unfortunately astrology and alchemy led him astray

TYCHO BRAHE was the eldest son of a Swedish nobleman and was born on the family estate (Knudstrup), in the year 1546, near the town of Helsingborg, which stands on the narrow strait between Sweden and Denmark. Twenty-three years previously the former had become independent of Danish sovereignty, and under the wise and capable reign of Gustavus Vasa, Tycho passed his youthful years.

When the boy had reached the age of ten his father died, and he passed under the care of his uncle, Otto Brahe. By that time he had not only learned to read and write his native language well, but had begun the study of Latin, and by the age of thirteen was so well grounded in that language and the fundamentals of mathematics, that it was considered time to send him to the University of Copenhagen, to specialize in those studies which led up to the profession of the law, for which his uncle destined him. In the following year, 1560, an eclipse of the sun had been predicted for August 21st, and the educated world of the day was naturally excited over the coming event. When it began precisely at the time set, Tycho was so moved that he resolved to make himself the master of a science that could foretell accurately an event so marvelous.

In 1562 he was transferred to the University of Leipsic to finish in law. But he exhibited no inclination for the profession, and when his uncle died in 1564, leaving him, at the age of 19, in possession of a large income, he took his future into his own hands, and devoted his energies to astronomy, much to the disgust of all his relatives except a maternal uncle, Steno Bille, who unhesitatingly encouraged him to follow his natural bent.

Leaving his native land he went to Wittemberg in Saxony, early in the spring of 1566, but moved to Rostock in Mecklenburg the following year. Here he became involved in a quarrel with a Swedish nobleman, with whom he fought a duel with swords in total darkness, with the result that his opponent sliced off the entire front of his nose, which naturally ended the contest. The damage was repaired by cementing on his face an artificial nose, constructed mainly of gold and silver which, for the balance of his life, was worn without serious discomfort or disfigurement.

Late in 1568 he journeyed to Augsburg in Bavaria, and there made the acquaintance of the brothers, John and Paul Hainzel, both astronomical enthusiasts, and also men of some means. To them he explained his desire to set up a quadrant of some twenty feet radius for observational purposes, the drawing for which so impressed them that they not only offered to bear the expense of constructing it, but to provide a suitable site for its installation in one of the suburbs of the city where Paul had a country home. To this was later added a sextant of 5-foot radius, and with these two primitive instruments many successful observations were made. Towards the end of 1571, by which time his fame had spread throughout Europe, he made a visit to his home town, and met with a warm reception from both friends and relatives, and particularly from his Uncle Steno, whose encouragement for his early ambitions was now fully justified.

This relative now offered him quarters on his own extensive estates for an observatory, and when he learned that his gifted nephew was also interested in alchemy—which, at the time, was

considered quite as reputable a field of inquiry as astronomy—agreed to provide him also with a fully equipped laboratory. This munificent offer was eagerly accepted by the young man, who was then in his 25th year, but was not immediately acted on. At the time Tycho was, of course, aware of the theories of the Universe that had been propounded by Copernicus a quarter of a century previously, but there are reasons for believing that he had never read the "Treatise" that set them forth, and it is certain that he rejected the general conclusions of the work, on the ground that they were contrary to the teachings of the Scriptures, and of the Church, of which he claimed to be a devout member.

In the fall of the year 1572 a "nova" suddenly appeared in the constellation of Cassiopeia. It was first seen by Brahe on November 11th, but had been detected by others as early as in August. It was an unusually brilliant one, remaining visible for over a year, and disappearing only in March, 1574. At its maximum it was the equal of Sirius in brightness.

Tycho was wonderfully impressed with the phenomenon, and made observations every clear night during its continuance, which later were published. These added so greatly to his reputation that the King, becoming interested, asked him to deliver a course of lectures on the subject. Here it should be mentioned that about a year previously Tycho had married a girl of the peasant class, to the deep offense of his relatives. But the success of his lectures, and the favor with which they were received at Court, much more than overbalanced the displeasure of his relatives in the public mind. Tycho, however, was so angered at the slights his wife had received at their hands that he determined to abandon Sweden as a residence, and early in 1575 left for Germany to find a more congenial environment.

Going first to Hesse Cassel he spent a week or more in delightful association with the Landgrave of that principality, who was one of the noted astronomical enthusiasts of the day.

From there he traveled into Switzerland, and after deciding upon Basle as a desirable location, and making a short visit to Venice, he began his return journey to Sweden to fetch his family to the new home. While preparing for the move he received an offer from the King of Denmark and Norway of a grant for life of the island of Suen, situated in the narrow strait between Denmark and Sweden, on which would be erected at royal expense all the buildings for such an observatory and laboratory as Brahe might plan, and equipped with all the instruments and appliances necessary for his work. The offer also included a liberal subvention to cover operating and maintenance costs, a house for his family and a salary for his support. Naturally, such a flattering proposal was at once accepted, and before the end of the year construction upon a most elaborate scale began. The ultimate total cost of the establishment was close to one million dollars, of which Brahe contributed nearly one half, almost impoverishing himself in the operation. He gave it the name of Uranienborg.

Here Tycho passed the next twenty years of his life, during which he not only made a large number of valuable and important stellar and planetary observations that added greatly to the current stock of astronomical knowledge, but also spent much time in the laboratory in resultless experiments in alchemy. It was in fact his devotion to the latter that caused his downfall.

In 1588 the King died, after a notable reign of 29 years. His son, Christian IV, who succeeded, was but 11 years old at the time, and naturally was easily influenced and controlled by those around him. In 1591 this boy sovereign made his first visit to Uranienborg, accompanied by a large party of courtiers, some of whom disapproved strongly of the favors that had been bestowed on Brahe, and most of whom were more interested in pushing their own fortunes than in advancing the cause of science. Furthermore, an opinion prevailed that no discoveries of any importance or value to the State had resulted so far from the extensive and costly laboratory experiments that Tycho had been conducting.

It was not long before these unfriendly individuals began to make trouble for him, and in 1597 his situation became so unpleasant that he moved his family from the island to Copenhagen, taking with him his smaller instruments, and all his books and notes. A little later he appears to have chartered a vessel, loaded into it as much of his larger instruments and chemical apparatus as could be easily moved, and with his family sailed for Rostock on the Mecklenburg coast. From there, having been cordially invited, he took his wife and children to the estate of his old friend Count Henry Rantzau, at the castle of Wandesburg, near the city of Hamburg, where he was made very welcome and urged to remain as long as he might desire.

Rantzau suggested an appeal to Emperor Rudolph of Bohemia, who was a notable patron of the mystical arts, and to make this as strong as possible Tycho went to work at once to compile a memoir of the results of his life's labors to date. With that in manuscript he started for Prague, and received a most royal welcome from the sovereign. Rudolph at once gave him a pension, a country estate, and finally offered the castle of Benach, in the suburbs of the city, as a site for his instruments and apparatus.

In August, 1599, he took possession, dispatched an assistant to bring his large instruments from the island of Huen, and his family from Wandesburg. Later, finding that the surroundings of Benach were not as suitable for his work as he at first thought, he begged the Emperor to allow him residence in Prague. He was at once permitted to establish himself temporarily in the royal edifice, and to set up his instruments in its gardens or

(Continued on page 117)

BATTLE BEFORE DAWN

BY ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

Man and Centaur fought to free a girl—and the fate of all mankind hung in the balance

"I WILL go talk to Gomar," Lion thought desperately. "Gomar will know what to do."

With one last look at the thing resting in the valley, he turned toward the mountain, toward the cave where Gomar lived. Gomar had been friendly with him in the past. Gomar would help him now—he hoped. His need was so desperate that only Gomar's great wisdom could help him.

"Ho, Gomar!" he called at the mouth of the cave. "Ho, Gomar! Come out. It is I, Lion, come to talk to you."

He heard a grunt in the cave, then hoofs clicked softly on the sandy floor, and Gomar, blinking owlishly at the light, stood in the entrance.

Gomar was the last of the horse people. He had the body of a small horse, the trunk, the arms, and the head of a human.

"What is it, Lion of the almost-ape people, what is it that you want?" He sounded cross.

"Tansy," Lion said.

"Eh?"

"Tansy is gone."

Thoughtfully Gomar studied the man who stood before him. For Lion was a man, although neither Lion nor any of his tribe had made that discovery as yet. Unlike the shambling apes, Lion stood as straight as a tree, with broad shoulders, and long strong arms, and—what was far more important—a high forehead. Lion could think. It was for this reason that, young as he was, he was the leader of the almost-ape people, the strong, straight-standing leader of a new race. In his hands he held a flint-headed club. He had no other weapons.

"And who," Gomar asked, "is Tansy?"

Lion had forgotten that Gomar did not know who Tansy was. Lion assumed that all of the people of the forests and all of those who lived on the mountains knew Tansy, Tansy of the clean, lithe limbs, Tansy of the gray eyes, skilled, clever Tansy, who sang and laughed and who made something inside Lion sing and laugh with her.

"Tansy—" he faltered. Then he remembered a way that might describe Tansy so that Gomar would know for certain who she was. "Tansy—when the leaves die once more and then turn green again, Tansy will be my wife," Lion said.

"Ah," Gomar said. "Now I remember. Tansy is that pleasing girl you brought to see me one time. Next spring you will marry her. Yes. Yes. That is good. Tansy will give you fine sons and daughters and your race will grow strong. Ah——" Gomar blinked.

Osmar reared high, his flying hoofs pounding at the disorganized Erd people

"Has something happened to her?"

"Yes," Lion said. "The Creatures of the Bird captured her this morning."

HE WATCHED Gomar's face as he told what had happened. He saw the sadness come over Gomar's face, and the sorrow, and the sympathy. He knew, then, that Gomar would help him, if he could. But Gomar said nothing.

"Didn't you understand me?" Lion questioned. "They have been setting traps in the forests, clever traps that you cannot see before you are in them. This morning they took Tansy in one of their traps."

Gomar spoke now. "I am sorry," he said. "For Tansy and for you."

This was not what Lion wanted to hear. "I want you to help me rescue her!" The words tumbled over each other in his anxiety to get them spoken. "I came to you because you are the only one who is wise enough to overcome the Creatures of the Bird. You will help me, won't you? You will give me a magic that will release Tansy? I must have her back. I must! I can't live without her. And those Creatures of the Bird they—they—" He couldn't say the words now, he couldn't speak of what would be done to Tansy by those who had captured her.

"I know what they will do," Gomar sighed. "And I have said I am sorry." He looked down into the valley that was the roosting place of the Bird and for a moment anger gleamed on his dark, bearded face. Then the anger faded into resignation.

Lion waited for Gomar to speak again. Gomar was silent. "But you will help me?" Lion questioned.

Gomar shook his head. .

"You mean you won't help me?"

"I mean I can't help you," Gomar gently corrected.

"But you—you—" Lion did not understand. To him, Gomar was the wisest of all living creatures. Gomar had weapons that slew from afar, he knew how to make the little sun that drives away the darkness,* and many other things.

"I can't help you," Gomar repeated. "What you ask is beyond my power."

"How can that be?" Lion questioned. "All the people of the forest know that the Creatures of the Bird remain here only because you permit them to; that, if you chose, you could lift your voice, and the Bird would be no more, you could stretch out your hand, and the Bird would be destroyed."

Gomar looked curiously at Lion then and the look said that now *he* did not understand what the other was saying. "I am afraid the almost-ape people have too high an opinion of my abilities," he said. "I am afraid you overestimate my strength, which is only natural because your race is newly come to this land. If you had been here three years ago, you would be better able to estimate the weakness of the horse people and the strength of the Creatures of the Bird."

"It is true that we have only recently come into this land." Lion said doubtfully. "We found you here and we found the Bird here. We are newcomers, but that does not mean we have not realized how great you are, and how powerful. You will help me, will you not, in rescuing Tansy?"

GOMAR did not answer. He looked at Lion and from Lion down into the valley where the Bird rested and back again at the man. "You do not understand," he said slowly. "Listen to what I have to tell you about them." He swept his arm in a gesture that in-

* The little sun that drives away the darkness: Fire.—Ed.

cluded the great valley below.

"Three years ago," Gomar said, "the Bird came!" There was bitterness in his voice, and sorrow, and a great sadness, and anger too deep for words.

"It flew through the sky, making a great roaring sound. It landed in the valley and the Creatures emerged from it. We of the horse people, of which I am the last, we were awed. We thought the Creatures of the Bird were gods. *'See, they fly through the sky!'* my people said. *'Only gods can fly through the sky. Let us go down and worship them and the great shining bird that carries them.'*

"We felt it was an honor for gods to pay us a visit," Gomar continued, and Lion listened. "We were very pleased. We went down to the great bird, to worship, all except old Judo, our medicine man. Old Judo would not go. 'There is evil in the wind,' he said. 'I smell it. Do not go near those creatures of the shining bird. They are bad.'

"My people laughed at him. 'You are jealous,' they said. 'You are a false prophet, old Judo. You are supposed to know what the gods are doing, and here gods come to visit us and you did not know they were coming.' "

Gomar shrugged massive shoulders in resignation. "I believed old Judo. I knew him. He might be mistaken but his heart was with the horse people and he would not utter false prophecies. But my people did not believe him. Although I was king, what could I do? My people wanted to go into the valley and worship the shining bird. A wise king cannot forbid his people to do what they are determined to do. I could not order them not to go. They would have gone secretly. I could only go along with them, and watch and wait to see what would happen!"

"What did happen?" Lion asked in an awed voice.

For an instant, anger blackened Gomar's face. Then, as memory recreated the scene of what had happened, the answer was replaced by fear and horror and by sick shame.

"They slaughtered us," he said. "As we knelt to worship, they slaughtered us. They pointed strangely shaped pieces of metal at us. There was magic in these things, evil magic. Twinkling streaks of fire leaped from them. Like lightning, the fire darted among my people. The air was filled with harsh, crackling noises.

"We were stricken with terror. We had come in awe, we had come in peace. When the flashes of fire ran among us, killing many, we did not know what to do. Some of us ran in one direction, some in others. We did not know what was happening.

"But we were fighters. We had come in peace but if there was to be war, well, let there be war, and who would get hurt we could not say. We had bows and arrows, spears and swords. We fought. The Creatures were small, thin-skinned, insignificant things, with great staring eyes. There was not one among the horse people who could not have whipped ten of them in a fair fight. We fought them. Our arrows were a hail smashing among them. We saw them go down before our arrows, many of them. We quickly formed ranks and when I saw them show signs of faltering, I ordered the charge——"

GOMAR reached back into the shelter of the cave, drew a scabbard from a wall niche, took a six-foot sword from the scabbard. As he swung the shining blade in his hands, he was again the leader of the horse people, fighting again that battle with the Creatures of the Bird.

"Ai, but we were fighters! The

sounds of our hoofs was an earth-shaking thunder as we charged. We were after these things that had come among us. We saw now that they were not gods. Gods are merciful and just. Gods cannot die. These creatures did die beneath our arrows. We charged them.

"They ran before us. They would not stand our charge. They ran from us, sought shelter in the body of the Bird. We charged the Bird!

"We would cut it to pieces with our swords. We would run it through with our spears. We would riddle it with our arrows. I led that charge and my sword was the first to pierce the body of the Bird.

"Pierce it, did I say? Nay, it did not pierce. It bounced off. The Bird was made of metal too, a harder metal than my good sword. It turned the blade. The arrows did not penetrate. The sharp spears made no impression on the tough hide of the Bird.

"And, through cunningly-contrived slits, the Creatures began to shoot at us from within the Bird. Oh, they slaughtered us. We could not get at them, but they, from the protection of the Bird, could slay us at will. I felt the air burning around me as their fire weapons hissed among us. I ordered the retreat.

"My people did not want to obey me. They were hot with the lust of battle. And——the horse people had never retreated from any enemy.

"We had to retreat now. I forced my warriors back, forced them to run. It was a miracle I was not killed. We took to the hills, running as fast as we could.

"A great roaring sound came from the Bird. Looking back, I saw it rise into the air. It was following us, coming after us."

"It caught up with us as we retreated, hovered in the air over us. The fire death danced down. We scattered, so that no more than one would be struck down at one time, but in spite of that, many of us were killed. Only when we had all succeeded in hiding did the Bird cease its roaring above us. Then it went back to the valley where it is now."

Gomar's voice went into silence. His shoulders sagged. "That night I led those of us who remained alive back to the Bird. This thing was evil. It must be destroyed. My hope was that we could attack it in the night, a sudden vicious charge that would enable some of us to enter its body before the entrances could be closed. Once we were inside, the Creatures would find we were no mean foe.

"The blaze of bonfires attracted our attention as we drew near. The Creatures were out in the open. They had built great fires. We slipped close, planning to charge through the fires and into the Bird before they knew we were near. Then we saw what they were doing around the fires——"

Anger and horror were in Gomar's voice.

"What were they doing?" Lion questioned tensely. The answer to this question was of the utmost importance to him.

"They were eating our dead comrades!" Gomar snarled. "They were feasting on the flesh of the horse people."

LION'S face was an emotionless mask as he heard the words.

"Did you charge them that night, as you had planned?" he questioned.

"Yes," Gomar answered. "We were so angry at what we saw that we charged them blindly. By some magical means, they seemed to know of our coming; for again they retreated to the protection of the Bird. The result was the same as before, except that when we re-

treated this time, there were very few of us left, very, very few. It was the last charge we ever made against the Creatures of the Bird. They were too strong for us. Their fire weapons destroyed us before we could come to grips with them, and most of all, they had the Bird. Against the Bird we could not fight at all."

Gomar's voice went into silence but his memory retraced what had happened after the Bird came, no one knew from where. The horse people had tried to stay away from the Creatures. But they had come hunting the horse people, for food. They were good hunters and they were always hungry. Of all the horse people Gomar alone remained.

Of late, the Creatures had ceased hunting the horse people. They had sought other sources of food, finding it among the new race that had recently come into this land, the almost-ape people. Gomar knew well the great apes. This new race he called the almost-ape people, because they were like the apes in many ways but different in other ways. How they were different Gomar did not clearly understand, but he sensed that they were, and he sensed the importance of that difference. Now that his own kind was gone forever, Gomar liked best the almost-ape people.

"My best advice to you, friend Lion, is to lead your people far away, to seek some spot where the Bird is not. There you may grow to greatness. If you remain here, the Creatures of the Bird will certainly hunt you down."

"I know," Lion said. "When the leaves turn green again, I had planned to leave this land. But now—now—"

He could not go on.

"What is one female more or less?" Gomar questioned. His shrewd old eyes watched Lion closely. "There are many females among your people and any of them will be glad to mate with you."

"There is none like Tansy!" Lion said quickly.

"What the Creatures take, they never release," Gomar reminded him.

"They must release Tansy!" Lion said grimly. "They must! Will you help me rescue her?" He looked fiercely at Gomar.

"What can you and I do, when all the horse people failed?" Gomar questioned.

"We can try!"

"We tried too!"

"We can try again and again and keep on trying. They shall not have Tansy. If you will not help me, I——"

"What will you do?" Gomar questioned.

"I will go alone!" Lion answered. "I will try to rescue her, I will not give up until she is rescued or I am dead."

Gomar shook his shaggy head.

LION turned and stalked away from the cave. His thought was of Tansy, of the clean lithe limbs and the eyes that were as bright as the skies of summer, his Tansy! The Creatures of the Bird should not have her, not while he lived. Without her, there would be no pleasure in being leader of the almost-ape people; without her, living would have no point. If Gomar would not go with him, he would go alone. Gomar was old and tired and the fire had gone out of him. He no longer had the courage to dare and the strength to fight.

A clatter sounded behind Lion.

He whirled, flint-headed club coming up.

It was Gomar following him. Gomar had donned a curiously-shaped breastplate of metal. Slung in its harness at his side was the great sword. He was carrying in his hands the death that strikes from afar, the big black bow that Lion had often seen and wanted.

"Ho, Lion," Gomar called. "Wait for me."

"What do you want?" Lion grunted.

"I am going with you!"

"You are going with me! But you said——"

"I was testing you, testing your heart, the strength of your courage. I come now to help you, and if I cannot help you, to die beside you."

Lion lowered the club until it rested on the ground. A slow smile glinted in his eyes. "You are very welcome," he said.

It was an odd pair that went down the trail together, the last centaur on earth, and an ape who had become a man, but didn't know it yet.

"There," said Gomar, cautiously parting the bushes, "is the Bird!"

It rested below them in the valley, a great sleek thing of shining metal. Lion had never been so near to it before. It glistened in the sun.

A few of its Creatures were visible around it. They were short and almost naked, with large heads, long pointed ears, and great staring eyes. Lion had seen them on hunting parties, but always at a distance. Every time he saw one of them a qualm of fear passed through him. It was not fear in the ordinary meaning of the word—Lion had not gained his name for nothing—but a sort of sick uneasiness. Somehow, he knew these things did not belong on earth, that they had come here from somewhere else, some other world, some other place. Looking at them, Lion hated them. Between him and them there would be enmity forever.

"There!" Gomar's voice hissed in his ear, "toward the nose of the Bird!"

Gomar was pointing at a stockade, a rude pen made of poles thrust into the ground. It was a kind of a cage. The Creatures of the Bird used it to hold their meat animals against the time when they would be needed for food.

Tansy was in this pen.

A quiver passed through Lion at the sight. He started forward out of the shelter of the bushes.

A rough hand jerked him back.

"Have you grown tired of living, Lion of the almost-ape people?" Gomar growled in his ear. "Or do you think you can walk up to the Bird and order the Creatures to give up your female?"

"That is Tansy," Lion faltered.

"So I guessed," Gomar grunted. "Tonight we will try to rescue her."

"Tonight? But—" A horrible thought was in Lion's mind. "Suppose they kill her before tonight?"

"Then we will go into the mountains to some safe place and build an altar and say prayers for her soul," Gomar answered. "And tomorrow you will take your people and leave this country."

"But—"

"There are no 'but's'!" Gomar said emphatically. "If you try to rescue her now, you will die. What good would a dead Lion be to Tansy, or to the almost-ape people?"

There was only one answer to that question.

THEY waited in the shelter of the trees until darkness came. And while they waited, Gomar told Lion many things.

He told Lion the secret of the death that strikes from afar, of the bent stave that throws a wooden shaft to the distance. "Take a stave of well-seasoned wood, and with your knife, carve it down until it tapers to a point at both ends. Cut a notch in each end. Then slowly and gently bend the stave and attach a cord made of the tendons of the deer in the notches. See! Like this."

Gomar demonstrated how to bend and string the bow. The cord hummed as he touched it. "Now make arrows,

like these," he said. "See that the feathers are properly cut and trimmed and that all of them come from the same wing of the bird. Tail feathers are no good. It is the wing feathers that are needed. And see that the shaft is straight or it will not fly true to its mark."

Lion listened carefully. He looked doubtfully at his own heavy club. He had thought it was a good weapon, and it *was*, when you were closing with your enemy, but there were many times when the club could not be used. He had often seen the bow that Gomar used and he had wanted to possess it but he had assumed it was some kind of a magic weapon that only Gomar knew how to control. There was no magic in it, he now realized. A bow could be made by anyone who knew how.

The thought sent a thrill through him. He could make a bow.

Gomar handed the bow to him. He ran his fingers along it, felt the close grain of the wood, tested the string.

"Here are the arrows," Gomar said. "Keep both bow and arrows for yourself and to serve as models from which others may be made."

"You mean for me to keep them forever?" Lion gasped.

"Yes," Gomar gruffly said. "Keep them—forever. Teach your people how to make and use them."

It was a very valuable gift. Lion fondled the bow. "But why," he questioned, "why do you give me these things?"

Gomar did not answer. Lion sensed that Gomar was keeping something secret.

"I want you to study this too," Gomar said. He drew the sword from its scabbard.

"You are giving me this too?" Lion whispered. Here was a gift that was really priceless! The great knife that did not get dull, that did not shatter when it struck something hard, as did the clumsy stone knives made by Lion's people.

"I am not *giving* it to you," Gomar grunted.

"Oh," Lion said.

"I will trade it for your club."

"What? You will trade this sword for my club?"

"Yes." Gomar's answer was a grunt that did not reveal his real feelings.

"But the sword is worth a hundred clubs," Lion blurted. "Why do you want to make such an uneven trade?"

"Shall we say that I have my reasons?" Gomar answered. He would say nothing more, turning aside all of Lion's questions. "I have another secret," he said at last. "That is even more important than the sword."

"What is that?"

"The secret of making the sword."

LION listened. Gomar told him how the sword was made, how first ore of certain kinds must be sought, the copper and the tin, how they were melted together and in what proportions, how the resulting mass of metal was pounded into shape and tempered, how the edge was honed to sharpness. Lion did not miss a single word. Here was a gift that was beyond all other gifts. Looking into the future, he could see his people with swords and bows, he could see them defeating their enemies, he could see them becoming strong, increasing in numbers, moving out of the forests and into the open lands.

"It is a good dream," Gomar said, as if he sensed what Lion was thinking. "It was once the dream of the horse people. It would still be their dream, if——"

He looked down into the valley. Hard lights glittered in his eyes. Down there was the Bird and the Creatures of the

Bird. And here was an end to the dreaming of the horse people.

Night was coming before Gomar finished telling all the details of the making of the sword. Below, in the valley, darkness, like some huge river silently pouring into a vast bowl, was flowing around the shining construction that nestled there. Tansy was still in the pen.

"What is your plan for rescuing her?" Gomar asked.

Lion had been thinking about this. While he had listened to Gomar, he had never quite forgotten Tansy. He had already made a plan. "I will creep silently to the pen," he said. "With the sword you have given me, I will cut away one of the logs. Tansy will be able to slip through the opening."

"Yes," Gomar nodded thoughtfully. "It might work. If the Creatures do not see you or smell you——"

Gomar seemed preoccupied with some other problem. It was obvious his mind was not on the rescue of Tansy. And, when they slipped down into the valley, Gomar would not go near the Bird. "I am not needed to assist in the rescue of the female," he said. "You have my sword. Go on alone."

To Lion, it sounded very much as if Gomar was afraid.

"Are you scared?" he asked.

"It may be that I am," Gomar uneasily admitted.

Lion went on alone. The last he saw of Gomar, the strange horse human was staring uneasily through the darkness at the outlines of the Bird. Gomar looked as if he wanted to run away. Lion wondered about Gomar. The horse human had seemed very brave in his cave. He had told of leading charges against the Creatures. Yet, when he came face to face with them, his courage seemed to falter.

But Lion had little time to wonder about Gomar. He was very near the Bird now. Its size startled him. From the hills above, it had seemed a tiny thing. Here, near it, he saw how big it was. It would hold a great number of the Creatures. Rows of lighted ports twinkled along its sides.

The Bird awed Lion. To him, who had not yet discovered he was human, the bird was magic, evil magic, and those who lived in it were master magicians. Looking at the Bird, he realized why Gomar was scared of it. The thing represented a future evil that made him shudder. The creatures who were masters of this thing would be masters of earth.

HE GOT a glimpse of the future, then, the future of his people. As long as the Bird remained, the almost-ape people would face misery and fear and hunger and death. Even if his people went far to the south and to the west, even if they hid in the lands beyond the ends of the earth, where the sun retired each night, the Bird could follow them. The almost-ape people would have to hide from it—forever.

The realization of this was a black shadow on Lion's mind. Momentarily, so dark was the shadow, he forgot even Tansy, crouched there in that butcher pen of the Creatures. What did it matter whether or not he rescued Tansy? There was no future for them. The future was for the Creatures of the Bird. Even the great sword that Gomar had given him, the bow with its arrows that dealt death afar, were of no avail in any land where the Bird was.

No wonder Gomar had seemed sad. Gomar had already seen the future.

Lion went on to rescue Tansy. No leopard, stalking its prey, ever made a more cautious approach than did he. He felt the rough stockade of logs before him. A low call brought Tansy

scurrying to the point nearest him.

"Is that you, Lion? Oh, Lion, go way quickly. Do not try to save me. Go far away. You will certainly be caught if you remain here."

She was almost hysterical.

"They haven't caught me yet," Lion said gruffly. "And as for you, keep silent."

He began sawing at the logs with his sword. It was slow, tedious, hard work. The edge of the weapon was not as sharp as he had at first thought. The log was tough. He had to work in silence. For all he knew, the Creatures could see in the dark. They might be watching him now, laughing at him, preparing to launch a fire dart at him. Lion worked doggedly on.

The log was cut almost through when the sound came. It was a *click* as of a stone being tossed against the body of the Bird. He froze. Was somebody throwing stones in the darkness?

Click!

The sound came again, louder this time. There was no mistaking it. Lion clearly heard the stone strike, heard it fall to the ground.

He crouched against the stockade, pressing himself close to the ground.

"What is it?" Tansy whispered.

"I don't know——"

A jolt of pain shot through his head. He heard Tansy cry out. He had been looking at the Bird and something had flashed from it and had struck him in the eyes, blinding him.

Lion didn't know it, but the things inside the ship, hearing the stone strike, had turned on a searchlight and had focused it on the pen used to hold their captives. The light was very powerful. It struck Lion's eyes and blinded him.

He leaped to his feet, and because he was blinded, tripped and fell. His eyes were red-hot balls of burning fire. At this short distance, the searchlight was brighter than the sun.

The things inside the ship saw Lion flopping around on the ground. They saw where he had been working at the stockade and knew that an effort had been made to rescue their prisoner. The would-be rescuer had been caught in the act.

IT was a situation that appealed to their idea of fun. To them, the inhabitants of this planet were animals, fit for food, and maybe, if complete investigation revealed that the planet was suitable for large-scale colonization, the inhabitants would be fit for slaves. The Creatures of the Bird were a cruel, space-ranging race, seeking worlds to conquer.

They saw Lion, blinded, stumbling around outside their stockade.

"He was trying to get into the pen!" one shouted.

"Let's go help him in, since he seems so eager to enter," a second suggested.

This was a suggestion that really appealed to them. They had had difficulty in keeping their larder stocked. Here was meat trying to get into the refrigerator. They opened a lock, streamed out to grab the blinded Lion.

Lion intuitively realized he must not continue looking at the light. He forced himself to look away. He was still partly blind but a little by a little his eyes were beginning to readjust. And—he knew now what had happened.

Gomar had betrayed him!

Gomar had thrown stones against the body of the Bird, knowing it would attract the attention of the Creatures!

Gomar, in spite of his fine words, was working hand in glove with the Creatures of the Bird. No doubt he had advised them on the best ways to set traps for the almost-ape people. Possibly he had betrayed his own kind, as he had certainly betrayed Lion. The gift of the

sword, of the bow and arrows, had been cunning bait designed to lure Lion into a trap.

Furious anger boiled within Lion at the thought. Gomar had betrayed him! The anger was none the less furious because it was helpless.

He heard the Creatures running toward him, heard them shouting gleefully. He was able to see a little now. Not much. The light was still burning but by looking obliquely toward it, he got a glimpse of the coming Creatures. He fumbled on the ground for the sword, found it.

"No, Lion!" a voice roared.

Lion stared in amazement toward the source from which the voice had come.

"Do not try to fight. Get your female and run!" the voice continued.

It was Gomar's voice. Gomar, the traitor! Gomar was shouting to him to run!

The Creatures heard the voice too. They turned abruptly.

Then Lion saw something that he did not in the least understand. The round lighted door through which the Creatures had emerged from the Bird was momentarily darkened by a dark body passing through it. Lion saw the body against the light streaming from the open lock.

The dark body was Gomar.

Gomar was diving headfirst through the open door. Gomar was entering the Bird. Lion's club was held above his head.

Two Creatures appeared in the door and the club struck at him, smashed them back and down.

Gomar was attacking the Bird.

LION did not begin to understand what was happening. By his own admission, Gomar was a coward. Even the sight of the Creatures frightened him. He would not willingly go near the Bird. Yet here he was attacking it, diving into its body. Lion did not understand.

If the half-blinded Lion was slow in understanding what was happening, the Creatures had no such difficulty. Attracted by the voice shouting at Lion, they had turned around. They saw Gomar enter through the lock. They knew what this meant.

In an instant, they forgot all about Lion. Lion was not important now. There was something else that was much more important. There was danger here, and they knew it. They also knew that they had been tricked, very badly tricked. They ran toward the open part. One of the horse people was inside the Bird, was inside the ship that had brought them here. This meant something, to the Creatures. They ran through the port after Gomar.

Sounds of conflict came from within the Bird. Great roars of rage, the wild screaming of the battle-cry of the horse people, sharp, crackling sounds that could only come from the operation of the magic weapons of the Creatures.

Lion stared in consternation at the Bird. What was going on here? He was suddenly aware that Tansy was beside him. She had knocked down the log he had almost cut through and had forced her way out of the stockade.

"Run!" she was urging.

Lion did not move.

"Run!" Tansy shouted. "While they are busy we can get away. We must escape while we have the chance!"

Lion did not budge.

"Gomar is in the Bird!" he said.

"What of it?"

"You do not understand," Lion said slowly. "You would not say that if you understood."

Lion was beginning to understand.

With understanding was coming elation, a heart throb of pride and joy. Gomar had not betrayed him. Gomar might have sacrificed him but the sacrifice would have been in a worthy cause and it would not have been betrayal. Gomar, in throwing the stones against the Bird, had known what the Creatures would do when they saw him.

Gomar's plan had been to enter the Bird! The only way he could do that was to trick the Creatures into opening the door. Then, while they chased Lion, Gomar would sneak into the Bird.

Now that he understood what was happening, Gomar's plan had Lion's enthusiastic support. Drawing the sword, he started toward the Bird.

He would help Gomar. The two of them, inside the Bird, could do great damage. The battle-cry of the almost-ape people was loud in the night. Answering it from within the Bird came the battle-cry of the horse people. Lion rushed toward the port.

It was slammed shut in his face. The last sound Lion heard was the great roaring battle-cry of Gomar, last of the horse people.

Then a new sound came from within the Bird, a great throbbing pulsation, an earth-shaking night-filling clamor of hideous, blasting sound.

The Bird began to rise into the air.

LION knew that he could do nothing now. He knew, also, that the time had come to run. With Tansy beside him, he ran into the darkness. He still did not understand everything that had happened.

A few minutes later his understanding was complete. They were a half mile away and had stopped to look back. The Bird was still rising in the air, beating with wings of streaming flame at the sky. The roar coming from it was a continuous sound. Suddenly the roar stopped. Simultaneously the flame coming from the Bird died out.

The Bird lurched in the sky. It started to drop. Then the roar came again and the streamers of flame gleamed luridly in the night. But now the roar was broken and intermittent, the streamers of flame were jagged, flicked on and off.

Something had been done to the Bird. Somewhere inside it something had been done. It moved slowly and erratically. And again the roar died.

This time it did not come again. The Bird turned its nose toward the ground, fell like a falling star. Lion held his breath in anticipation of what he sensed was coming.

It came. The Bird fell like a stone that has been dropped from a great height. It struck the earth. There was a rolling blast of sound like the roar of a hundred thunderstorms. Fury broke loose in the night. Flame climbed up toward the summit of the sky. The surface of the earth rolled with the explosion. Like an animal ridding itself of a pestiferous fly, the surface of the earth twitched.

For several minutes there was a heavy rain of bits of metal falling to the ground, metal that had climbed sky-high and now was coming back to its final resting place. Lion knew that the Bird was finished. It was done forever. And he knew something else too.

"Gomar!" he whispered. "Gomar entered the Bird and destroyed it. He knew, while it remained, there would be no peace for us. He destroyed it—for us."

In his heart was a glow of gratitude for Gomar, who was the last of the horse people, for Gomar, who had died in the flaming wreckage of the Bird. Gomar had died, but Lion sensed that something of Gomar would live forever.

Lion would tell the story of Gomar

and of Gomar's sacrifice to his sons and daughters and they in turn would tell it to their children. The story would roll down the generations for uncounted ages. The almost-ape people might forget that Gomar had given them the bow and the sword, they might think eventually that they had discovered these things for themselves. But they would use what Gomar had given them to become a mighty people, to become a flood of life pouring over the surface of the earth. And always they would remember something of what Gomar had given them.

Gomar would become a legend, a folk memory of a race that was half horse and half human. He would have liked that.

THE END

AMAZING FACTS

By A. MORRIS

Odd bits of truth exist in our daily life which are perhaps even more amazing than fiction itself

THE beavers are the largest gnawers of our continent. They are possessed of large front teeth and broad flat tails. Their noses are not large but are quite sensitive, and their activities are numerous and interesting. They weigh up to forty pounds and are well adapted to life in water. The hind feet are webbed and are equivalent to oars on a rowboat, the flat tail serves as a rudder and also as a propelling organ since by means of it the beaver may push himself along. In mating, the beaver is said to beat the surface of the water with his flat tail thereby making a great slap or crash on the water. This is indeed a strange way to get a mate, but it is quite effective for the beaver.

To build a dam, the beaver gathers stones, willow shoots, driftwood and amazingly enough fells trees for this purpose. It has been said that beavers can fell a tree to within a hair's breadth of where they want it to fall. With their huge gnawing teeth and strong jaws, it would seem that they could cut down anything. The beavers build their dams to fit the streams they are built in. The streams are selected with care usually where the water is not moving too fast. If the stream is sluggish, the dam is built straight across it. If not, the dam is built in a curved path following the line of motion of the stream. It is quite a sight to see, several beavers busily hustling to and from, carrying sticks and stones across stretches of land and water.

The beavers also build homes. They do not build mansions or palaces, rather two or three room flats. Their rooms are not so great in size but several beavers may live in the same house and they store their food in one room of it Beavers eat bark and leaves, maybe even little fish.

Beavers are sociable animals. They even build large meeting places to gather in. The entrance to both house and meeting place is almost inevitably found under the water. The houses and dams are not beautiful by any mean, yet they are strong enough to resist both the flow of the river, the torrents of rain, the stress of the wind and the cold of the ice. We must admire this little animal whose industry is scarcely paralleled in nature.

* * *

BIRD life in the occupied countries is threatened with extinction, as a result of thefts of eggs by hungry people. The Hague correspondent of Pester Lloyd, a Budapest newspaper, said that although field birds such as spoonbills and lapwings had decreased by 35 per cent during the last 50 years, the reduction had become even more noticeable since the war because people go on egg hunts during breeding time and empty the nests.

Since regulations for the protection of bird life are not being observed, bird lovers are tying to help by acting as voluntay watchmen near breeding places, the correspondent reported.

* * *

WE SWEAT when we are hot, and we shiver when we are cold. Even the most uneducated person is acquainted with these two facts, yet it is not so well understood just why they occur.

From the beginning it must be understood that the body is an amazing machine with various and innumerable devices for receiving impressions and reacting to them. Another point which it is neces-

sary to understand is that the brain possesses similar devices, more complex but nevertheless amazing in their scope and ability to perform necessary functions. Just such a part of the brain is the temperature regulator in the lower portion.

When the brain is informed of changes which take place around the surface of the body, by means of nerves, it causes various actions by use of its own nerves. As an example, when the body surroundings are cold, the thermostat goes into action by shunting blood away from the skin so that there is no chance of the blood conducting cold internally; another example of what happens when this center is informed of cold is that it causes the muscles to twitch. Muscle twitching burns up energy and causes heat to be liberated; this, of course, is similar to turning on the radiators in our homes, for it heats up all parts of the body.

When the surroundings become warm, the body and thermostat are prepared for this also. We tend to be lazy in heat thereby cutting down the source of much body heat; similarly the blood is shunted toward the outside and near to the surface where evaporation of sweat takes place. This is very important; we all know that evaporation causes cooling from the fact that if we place a hand dipped in lukewarm water in front of a fan blowing warm air, we perceive instant cooling. The body uses this to keep itself from getting too warm. The above statements have much practical use: they explain why one should not take a hot bath after eating. Since the blood must be near the gut for proper digestion, taking it away to cool the body, as would be done in any warm place, is harmful to the digestion. It must be confessed that there is hardly a more interesting precise mechanism in the entire human body than the functioning of the thermostat.

* * *

WE AMERICANS must use every available trick we know to increase our production for the war effort and after we have used our known tricks we'll have to think up some new ones.

One of the latest to be introduced is the use of color in factories to increase output by cutting down accidents and fatigue among workers. The usual black and drab gray colors used on machines quickly tires the workers, especially when they are forced to stay at their machines for extended periods of time.

By testing various colors it was found that if there was a contrast between the color of the machine and the color of the materials worked on, accidents were reduced to a minimum. Further tests between the colors used gave light buff the number one position in effectiveness although aluminum and light grey were close runners-up in the order named. Yellow was tried but it was found to tire the workers too much and could not be used. The use of colors tended to lend a more cheerful atmosphere to the surroundings and this is especially helpful in maintaining the spirits and thus the output of women workers.

Not only does the management benefit from the reduced accident rate and increased efficiency of workers, but there is a decided reduction of overhead costs through the use of color. The light colors do not absorb as much light and thus a greater efficiency is given to the plant's lighting system.

VIGNETTES OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

(Continued from page 103)

park, and in the buildings surrounding it. The Emperor then crowned his benificences by purchasing a house for him in Prague, and into this Tycho moved with his family in February, 1601. But before the year had come to an end, and just as he was beginning to enjoy the comforts and honors of his new home, he fell ill, and in less than two weeks passed away at the early age of less than fifty-five years.

In estimating Brahe's position as a scientific man it is necessary to remember that in his day the study of the heavens was carried on mainly in the hope of enabling the student to cast correct horoscopes, and that those who interested themselves in such work were really astrologers, and in no sense astronomers, as the word is used today. Furthermore, practically all the patrons of the art, the rulers and men of wealth who encouraged and supported celestial observation and study, did so mainly in the hope that discoveries might ensue that would redound to their material benefit, or enable them to avoid threatened danger or prolong life. The same was true of the alchemistic art, which had for its object the discovery of ways to transmute the base into the precious metals, and to produce elixirs or drugs that would prolong life or cure its ills. Neither astronomy nor chemistry as sciences had yet been born.

Brahe was really an astrologer and alchemist, and no more. He held to the Ptolemaic cosmology, and rejected that of Copernicus, not because the former appealed to his reason and the latter did not, but because the authorities of the Church of the day supported the one, and condemned the other. Into the matter of the reasonableness of this position he had no inclination to inquire.

Hence, though he was a brilliant and ingenious inventor of appliances for observational use, and with their aid made a very large number of observations of note, they led to nothing in the way of a better understanding of the cosmos. The same may be said of his laboratory work, all records of which have disappeared, if notes were ever made.

Thompson's Time

By SGT. MORT WEISINGER

THROUGH the blue haze of cigarette smoke the tall, red-headed chap stared quizzically across the room at the dapper, fair-haired little man, whose waxed mustache bristled belligerently.

"You're out of luck, Thompson," the little man snapped. "You shouldn't have started that story without consulting me first. That serial isn't worth the paper it's printed on!"

Young Donald Thompson stroked his tanned forehead and scowled.

"A fine editor you are! You admit that the story is my best literary work to date—even better than my last novelette which you featured—yet you'll permit a mere handful of reader's letters to influence you. What are you anyway—the editor of *Rocket Stories*, or a puppet?"

The little man waved his hands, releasing nervous energy.

"Now look here, Thompson," he said placatingly, "I've told you before that all time-traveling stories were taboo with this magazine office. My readers are too sophisticated. Doctors, lawyers, students and professional men in all different walks of life are enthusiastic followers of my publication. If there is anything at all that disturbs them, it's an illogical story. Why, the last time I printed a time-traveling story, we received dozens of protests from readers.

Traveling Theory

If you went back in time to kill your grandpop, you wouldn't be born to go back to kill—just how would it work out?

No matter how ingenious be the plot, the old 'grandfather' argument invariably whips the author!"

"Grandfather argument?" echoed Thompson. "What's that?"

"What!" the little man exploded. "Haven't you ever looked at the readers' letters in my magazine?"

"Only when my name is mentioned," Thompson admitted, a sheepish grin spreading over his face. "What's it all about?"

The little man twirled his mustache. "That explains a lot of things," he murmured to himself absent-mindedly. He went on. "I'll explain it to you—as briefly as I can make it."

"Let us say that John Jones builds a time-machine. With it he manages to project himself into the past. Once transported there, he confronts his grandfather when the latter is yet in his knee-pants. Jones kills his grandfather and thereby biologically prevents his own birth. Since John Jones *is* already living, despite the death of his progenitor, the fallacy of the entire affair becomes apparent at once. And that, Mr. Thompson, is why all time-traveling stories are one hundred percent sheer oil of over-ripe bananas!"

"It does sound impossible when you put it that way," commented Thompson. "Your readers certainly are clever. I guess you can't put anything over on them. You win—I'll throw this yarn into the junk-heap."

"Go home and forget it, Don," mollified the editor. "Tap out an interplanetary story or some formula fourth-dimension stuff. I can even use a sunspot story—but for Pete's sake—lay off traveling into the past!"

"Sure, skipper, sure," agreed young Thompson rather abstractedly as he walked across the luxuriously carpeted floor of the office of *Rocket Stories* and slammed the door behind him.

Lou Hellers, the capable editor of *Rocket Stories,* gazed into space speculatively. He turned to his secretary and frowned.

"You know, Viola," he said, "maybe I shouldn't have turned down that story. What the hell, it held my interest all the way through and was damn well written. And that's more than I can say for a lot of the stuff I've been reading lately. Heck, those readers make me sick, always yammering for brand new stories, with plausible plots and scientific data that an Einstein couldn't find a hole in. After all, we publish *fiction,* and as long as a story is entertaining—well, that's all there is to it. What the hell if the time-traveling theme is hackneyed and illogical. It's still good for a thrill or two! Say"—Hellers suddenly demanded of his secretary—"you don't think Thompson will get sore and peddle that yarn to that lousy *Modern Aladdin Stories?* Wouldn't my face be red if it clicked there and the fans went wild about it!"

Viola Smith, Heller's winsome secretary, reached for an ashtray and ground out her lipstick-daubed cigarette. "Nope, boss. Thompson's a pretty loyal cuss. He took me out to lunch a couple of days ago and I sounded him out about our competition. He thinks the world of our outfit. And he was pretty pleased to hear that you intended boosting his word-rate. You should have seen his face glow when I showed him the proofs on the next cover—the one with his name splashed all over it."

Hellers leaned back in his swivel chair. "You know, Viola," he said thoughtfully, blowing smoke ceilingward as he spoke, "maybe I can get Thompson to save that story by a rewrite. He'll have to cut six thousand words and speed up the action at the beginning to give it a snappier start. I'll fix up the motivation angle myself and

change the time-traveling explanation. After all Thompson's name on a cover does boost old man circulation."

Hellers glanced at his wristwatch, saw that it lacked twenty minutes to closing time. He reached for a pink rejection slip and expertly tucked it in between the clip on a manuscript and its first page. "It's another story from that guy on the coast who thinks we never read A. Merritt," he explained to his secretary. "By the way, Vi," he said abruptly, "how about dinner with me tonight? I promise not to talk shop."

IT WAS almost a year later before Donald Thompson entered the offices of *Rocket Stories* again. On that momentous occasion, Lou Hellers brought his fist down on his glass-topped desk with a smashing impact. He yanked his imported cigar from his mouth, hurled it to the floor and stamped on it with one heel, viciously, deliberately. Then he shot out one arm and pointed a shaking figure at the man before him.

"You—you!" he flamed, almost incoherent from anger. "How can you have the nerve to walk into this office? You don't think you can get away with the stunt you pulled—"

"Cut the dramatics Louie, you old soandso," interrupted the object of Hellers' wrath, a very much unperturbed Donald Thompson. "What's eating you?"

"What's eating me?" Hellers exploded. "I ought to throw you right out on your ear. The way you walked out on me. For one whole year you disappear. Thousands of readers write in yelping for a Thompson serial—and where the hell are you? We want to put out an annual and feature a Thompson novel—and Donald Thompson has moved to parts unknown! I get an offer on movie rights for your 'Hybrid of Horror,' and not even Walter Winchell knows what happened to you. No answer to phone calls, special deliveries, telegrams. Swell guy you are walking out on us. What's the kick—haven't we always treated you swell? You know that whenever you needed any dough you always had my okay for an advance. You're a big bum!"

Thompson brushed an imaginary speck of lint from his suit.

"Not bad pyrotechnics, Louie. I could give you a lot of alibis—but why use 'em? I could tell you that I'm sick of writing novels that bring golden shekels into the coffers of your mag—but which have me going nuts trying to write up. Besides, why should I write science fiction? The market is damned limited. You turn down a story and what markets are left? Just one or two places—and there are fifty million hams trying to break in there and my stuff gets lost in the shuffle. I'm off for bigger and better things."

"So which?" came back the irritated editor.

"So I'm telling you that you're going to chew your own words in another minute," answered Thompson. "Where do you think I've been during the past year? What do you think I've been doing?"

"That's easy," guessed Hellers. "Either writing the great American novel or going in for an expanded love life."

"Louie, you dope," said Thompson eagerly "I've built a time machine."

Hellers turned to Viola. He tapped his forehead significantly. "It got him, kid. Too much science fiction."

Thompson jabbed Hellers with his forefinger. "On the level, Louie, I've done it. I just finished the thing yesterday. I'd like to tell you how it works, but you'd probably want to lift it and pass it off in one of your editorials. I've devised a means of traveling into

the past. And do you know what I'm going to do, Louie? *I'm going into the past and kill my grandfather!* Then we'll see just how hot you and your readers are!"

Hellers stared at Thompson, hard and long. Somehow he sensed that the author wasn't trying to put anything over on him; he *did* sound convincing.

"How does it work, Don? What are its principles?"

"Nix!" answered Thompson. "I flatly refuse to tell you about it. I could give you a lot of talk about rays, spheres, vibrations, dimensions and the rest of the works. Read my story 'The Time Tryant' and that may give you an idea. But I absolutely refuse to give you any details whatsoever concerning the functioning of my machine. At least, not util I've completed killing my grandfather. Maybe after then. But not now."

"When do you intend to start your time- traveling activities?"

"Right now. Today," answered the young author. "Maybe I'll get a story out of it." He strode out of the office. It was the last time Lou Hellers ever saw him alive.

* * *

DON THOMPSON revolved some of the very intricate rheostats and dials in his time-machine and brought the apparatus to a stop. "This," he said to himself, "should be the year 1870. A little hunting and I should find my father's old man." He fingered his revolver knowingly. Despite his facetious outlook there was grim, cold purposefulness in his movements.

It wasn't very difficult for him to locate his late ancestor, alive and kicking. Careful questioning of the various people in the neighborhood had achieved his desire. Young Thompson looked him over. He looked like a good-natured cuss; tall, gangling, with an infectious boyish smile and a pair of old-fashioned spectacles.

Therefore, it was with some regret that Thompson leveled his weapon at the fourteen-year old lad who was eventually destined to be his grandfather and pumped a bullet at his forehead. For a moment Thompson stood and watched the twisted, amazed expression that filled the boy's face as he toppled to the floor. Thompson watched the blood ooze all over the youth's forehead, then made a hasty retreat to his time machine. It would not do to be apprehended for his act in this strange time-world.

There was no emotion in him other than that he had fulfilled a task that had been gnawing at his inner consciousness for several months. He didn't think of himself as a murderer. He considered himself a lawful executioner, who had killed in the interests of science. He was fascinated by this time-traveling business and wanted to see what its eventual outcome would be.

Again he expertly arranged the dials and switches in their proper order. A faint, resounding hum told him that he was being projected into the present from which he had come. This was the dangerous part of the experiment, he felt. Suppose he had miscalculated—suppose his mathematical reasoning had a fallacious postulate behind it. Suppose he wouldn't arrive in his own time . . . .

The machine abruptly came to a stop with a jarring smash that shook him and ejected him violently out of it. He landed on cool, green grass. The terrain looked natural enough, but he was unfamiliar with its location. Puzzled, Thompson turned to the time machine. It was hopelessly smashed, a mass of tangled but bent metal. How in the world he had ever survived the crash

and what had caused it he didn't dare to ask himself.

He shrugged his shoulders and proceeded to follow up a path nearby. For two miles he walked, looking for signs of civilization. Finally, just as he was beginning to feel weary from his exertions and the beating sun which was sapping his energy, he made out a walled-in estate in the distance. Hope surged within him. He raced briskly to it, hoping against hope that he was in his own time.

As he entered the estate he noticed two neatly dressed men, clad in white clothes, earnestly engaged in discussion.

"For Heaven's sake, man," he said breathlessly, "what year is this?"

THE TWO men exchanged knowing glances between them. "This is the year 1943," tolerantly replied the shorter one, as if humoring a madman. "Why do you ask?"

Thompson breathed an audible sigh of relief. Thank Providence nothing had gone wrong. He was safe after all. Ignoring their questions he spoke again, this time in as casual a tone as he could manage, for they must not think him mad. "How far is it from here to New York? What town in this?"

The two strangers literally jumped into the air. Their faces registered expressions of extreme surprise, and the shorter man's mouth yawned wide open in evident astonishment. Equally bewildered, Thompson watched them. The taller man started to speak, but his companion pulled him aside and for a minute they whispered to one another.

"Don't you know," said the shorter one at last, "New York was wiped out of existence during the war of 1920? The Germans did it with poison gas."

Thompson stared at them, trying to disbelieve. A ghastly premonition was gaining hold on him. He darted questions at them. Always came back the answer he had hoped would not come. Gradually, by questioning the two men, he pieced together the whole picture. The fact that he had killed his grandfather had altered the entire course of human history. His grandfather had been a World War major, had won some strategic positions. By eliminating his grandfather from the picture, those positions had never been taken, and the entire outcome of the war had been influenced.

Because of his prank Thompson had unwittingly removed all ties with the world he knew. No friends left . . . gone was his sweetheart . . . what could he do for a living now? All this he realized in a fleeting instant. Mechanically he reached for his revolver, pointed it at his temple. It was only fitting that he should die from the same gun that had killed his grandfather. With grim resolve he pulled the trigger and fell dead, a ragged hole in his forehead.

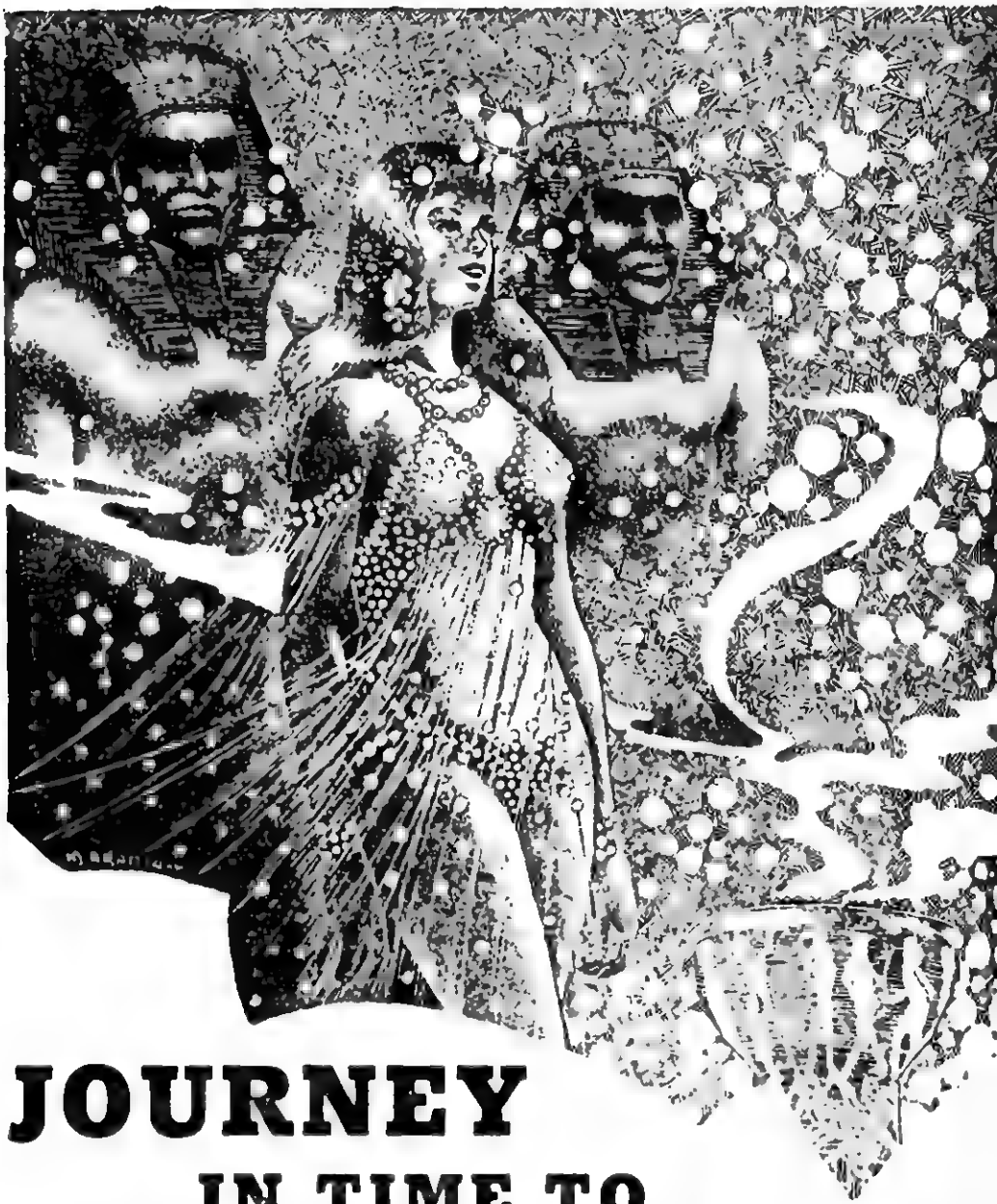
At the sound of the shot two uniformed men ran up to the two white-clad strangers who stood looking at the dead Thompson.

"What have you nuts been telling this guy," shouted one of them. "Not about that phoney last war of yours?"

The two asylum inmates nodded affirmatively. "Sure," one of them volunteered, "we told him how New York was wiped out and the rest. Then he shot himself."

"These two nuts should be in a straight-jacket," commented one of the guards. "Always harping on that last war of theirs."

Donald Thompson had never noticed that, in the picture of his grandfather in the family album, the man had had a white, furrowed scar on his forehead that might have been caused by a glancing bullet. If he had, things might have been different. . . .



JOURNEY IN TIME TO CLEOPATRA

By HELMAR LEWIS

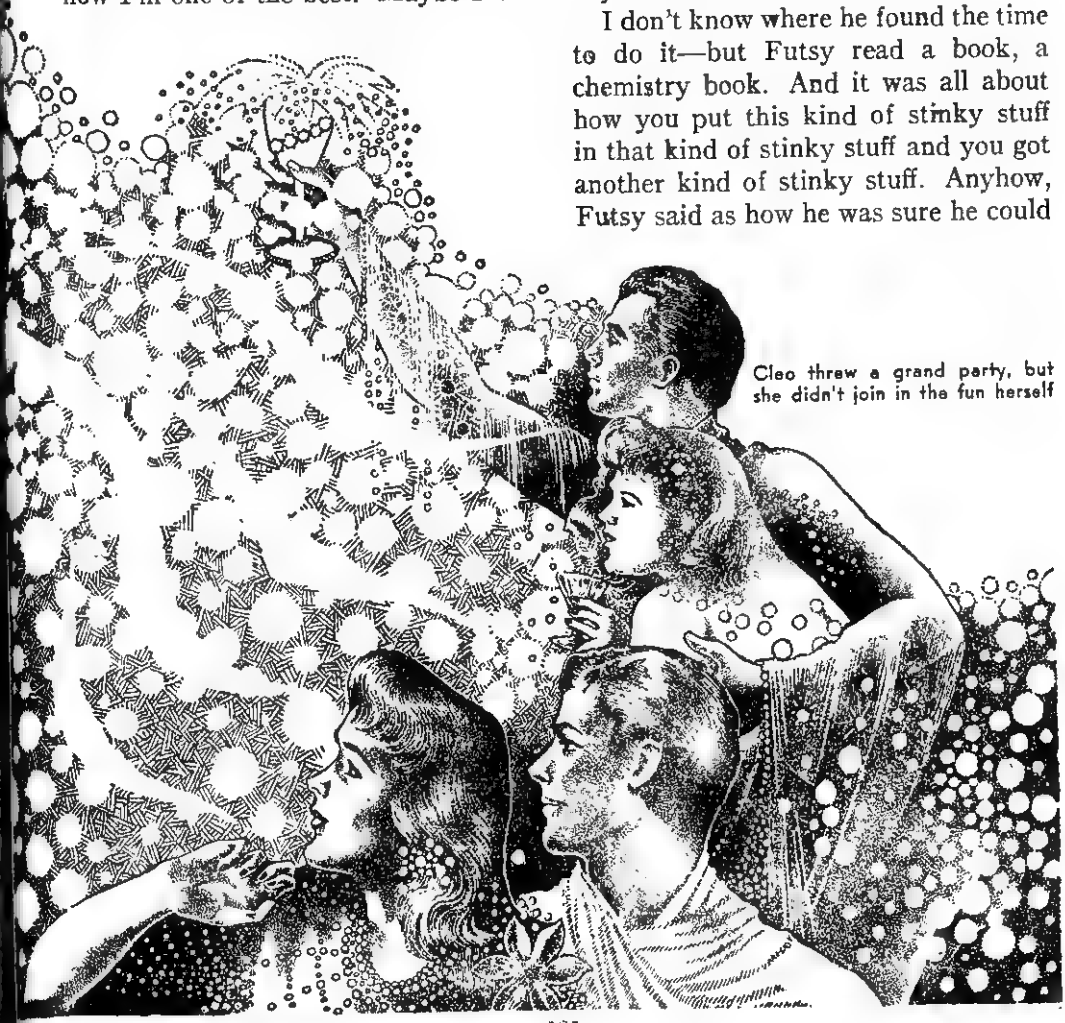
Hank entered the Indianapolis race with a new fuel in his racer—and wound up twenty centuries in the past!

IT HAPPENED all on account of Futsy Dugan. Futsy was one of those guys who's always futsing around with this, that and the other thing. If he wasn't trying to invent a new kind of rocket racer, then he was almost blowing all us out of house, home and happiness with a new mixture of oil for my racing buggy. As a matter of fact, that's just what he was doing when all this happened.

You see, I'm Hank Conners. You must've heard about me. I'm one of them auto-racers you see shooting around a track like as if they was nuts. Some of the guys in the know say as how I'm one of the best. Maybe I am. Anyhow, I was born with a tire-wrench in one hand, an oil-pump handle in the other and the smell of exhaust gas in my nose. On account of my old man was *the* Billy Conners, grand old man of the auto-racers, and you heard of him! Him and my mother used to go barnstorming around the fairs for their living. And I was born one day right after my mother had cracked her bus up in a bad spill.

But getting back to Futsy— He was my boss mechanic and a better guy never walked the earth. What he didn't know about automobiles in general— and my Diesel auto-racer in particular —just wasn't worth knowing.

I don't know where he found the time to do it—but Futsy read a book, a chemistry book. And it was all about how you put this kind of stinky stuff in that kind of stinky stuff and you got another kind of stinky stuff. Anyhow, Futsy said as how he was sure he could



Cleo threw a grand party, but she didn't join in the fun herself

get an oil mixture that'd do wonders with my Diesel.

It did! Futsy had no idea about the kind of wonders it was going to do. Maybe he might have gotten a good idea if he knew what happened to all the wrenches and bolts and a lot of other auto equipment that began to disappear just when he started to work on his new oil-mixture. Futsy blamed it onto thieves and let it go at that on account of he was too busy with his oil-mixture experiments to worry about it. But it was me that shelled out the dough for all that stuff and I was plenty het up about it. I even socked a big roustabout at the track on account of he called me a liar when I accused him of heisting all that stuff.

Anyhow, it all happened one day when we was down at the Indianapolis brick-track for one of the biggest races of the year. My little Diesel job was all tuned up and running as sweet as a green-grass filly just out of the feed-box. We was cooking with good old oil, but Futsy says as how he'd got the formula for the new oil all worked out and he'd made up a big batch of it for us to use in the race. Me, I don't go for that new-fangled stuff and I tried to rule it out. But Futsy, he was so het up about what his new oil could do, he insisted almost with tears in his eyes that we try the stuff out at least.

"Jus' gimme one break, Hank!" he says.

"Suppose it don't work!" I says.

"It will!" Futsy insists. "Better'n anything we ever used; I'm telling you the stuff's better'n dynamite. It'll smack the pistons like a ton of bricks and send the old bus scooting around the track like as if it was a million horsepower plant!"

So I lets him have his way and he fills up the tank of my racer with the new oil. Funny thing happened, though. Even at the race-track, where we was warming up my racer, a couple or three tools mysteriously disappeared from where Futsy was working with them. That should have gave me a clue about what was going to happen. But it didn't. I was worried about Red Ingram, the dirtiest auto-racer that ever side-swiped a guy on a sharp turn, on account of he was also entered in this Indianapolis Special. I'd beaten him out plenty the last year and, from the dirty looks he gave me at the club-house, I knew he was going to try some of his dirty tricks on me.

But I ain't one for worrying much about the other guy on account of I'm pretty well able to take care of myself, and Red Ingram. So I checked my instruments and stuff while Futsy was filling the tank with his new oil. The Diesel was hitting like sixty and I figures that maybe this here new oil is all that Futsy said it is. It sure delivered more power than any other fuel we'd been using.

IN NO time we was all lined up at the starter's line waiting for him to drop the checkered flag. I give a look back to where Red Ingram was hunched behind the wheel of his Ingram Special and I grins at him. But Red, he don't give out with nothing but a dirty look that woulda sent the chills down another guy's spine. Not me, though. I just laughed in his face and turned back to watch the starter.

All of a sudden, the starter dropped his flag. Red was off with a roar of motors that was always sweet music to my ears. Like I always do, I'm not too anxious to take the lead first off. Let the other guy do that, I say, and wear himself out. I like to conserve my strength until the end of the race when you need it most. So, with all the other guys roaring past me, I just idled

along, nursing the Diesel like as if it was a baby. But, all the time I'm getting a funny feeling in my stomach. It was like as if I was holding in the reins for a million horses. You know what I mean? Like as if all I had to do was step down a little harder on the accelerator and I'd go shooting around the track a million miles a minute.

I don't know. Maybe it was that there new oil Futsy had put into the tank. Anyhow, that's how I felt. I gave a look out of the corner of my eye to see what the other guys around were doing.

Sure enough, who do I see idling along with me at the first turn but Red Ingram. He's still got that dirty look on his mug. Then I see him take a quick gander at the turn ahead. I see his hands grip the wheel of his car, and I know I've got to do a heap of quick thinking and snappy driving if I'm to get out of this one.

Red was on the inside of the turn. And pacing me just as we made it, I see his car slide over to mine, and I know he's out to sideswipe me like he's done to many another poor guy, and like he's tried out on me couple or three times. Most of the green drivers, of course, would try to pull away. That's the first thing you'd think of doing. And that's what Red would be looking for on account of he'd just keep on edging closer and closer until you lost control of your car and went shooting out over the embankment or into another car.

But not me! No sirree! I don't back water for no guy, not even if his name is Red Ingram. So, instead of pulling away from him, what do I do but turn my wheel so's my car edges in closer to his. That fazes Red for a second and I see him stop pulling his Special over. That meant that I had the edge on him. So I turn my wheel a little and pull my bus over to his a little more.

THAT'S where I made my mistake, I guess. I should've been satisfied with just fazing him into not going ahead with his dirty work. But me, I got my Irish up and I figures I'll teach Red a lesson he won't forget for a long time. So I keeps on crowding him closer and closer to the inside thinking maybe I could force him to swing away sharply, lose control of his car and go smashing out into the field.

Red sees what I'm up to, and just as we're both pulling out of the turn, our cars only about a foot apart, he goes me one better. Instead of pulling away, he gives his wheel a quick jerk, laughs in my face and swings the front of his racer smack into the side of mine!

I tried to swing away from him. But it was no use. He kept on coming. And before I knew what was happening, he was right on top of me and I could hear the crunch of his fenders smashing against mine.

Then a funny thing happened. Red's car stopped short all of a sudden. Something must've happened to his brakes, I guess, in the crash. He came flying out of his seat and landed smack into the seat of my own bus!

Then another funny thing happened. It seems that, when Red's car hit mine, he hit my tank a glancing blow. Maybe it made sparks. Maybe it was just the shock of his car against the tank. Maybe it was a dozen other things, I don't know. But, all of a sudden, a big cloud of smoke began to come out of the gas tank. It was a funny greenish color shot through with streaks of blue and red and what-not. And it stank out loud, almost as bad as Futsy's laboratory used to stink. And it come over and around Red and me in the car,

like as if it was that there camouflage smoke that is used in war.

And, then, all of a sudden, I began to feel like as if I was holding the wheel behind a million horsepower power-plant! The smoke got in my eyes and nose and I began to cough plenty so's I was sure I'd soon be crashing into one of the racers ahead of me. And, all the time, I felt kind of woozy in the head, and light, as if my body had lost all its weight and I was a cloud, or something.

The last thing I heard was the yelling of the crowd in the stands. You know how they act up when a serious smash-up is in the cards. That's what they come out to see: dangerous risky driving and the more smashups the merrier, on account of it makes them feel all the safer sitting in their comfortable seats in the stands.

I DON'T know how long I was out. It must've been a long time on account of, when I come to, I didn't hear that there crowd yelling for blood. For a long time, I didn't even hear the roar of my Diesel, only a funny kind of silence, the kind that's in a graveyard at the hour of midnight or in a haunted house. And, funny thing, I was sure I heard music, like as if it was a million miles away. But that don't last for long on account of, pretty soon, I feel myself coming out of it like when I used to come out of a sock on the button in a knock-down brawl. And I shake my head to clear it.

Then I hears the sound of the mob in the stands again, coming back to me very faint at first but getting louder and louder until it was close up. Hank, I says to myself, if you can still hear them yelling bums, then you're still alive. I looks down at the seat and I see Red Ingram is still there scrunched up like as if he'd been out for a month of Sundays. But I guessed he was alive.

By this time my head was all clear and I knew everything that was going on. So I take a gander around me to see where I am and what the other racers is doing so's I wouldn't smash into them.

Holy smoke! I don't see no auto-racers a-tall! I see I'm on a race-track all right on account of there's nothing that looks more like a race track than another race-track, and on account of there was a standful of people all around us. But I don't see no auto-racers. What I do see is a bunch of guys driving around the track in little wagons! And there's a flock of horses pulling each wagon. And there's wicked long knives sticking out of the sides of the wheels so's a guy like Red Ingram could never pull a side-swiping trick.

Where the dickens am I?

And then I suddenly remembers I'd seen something like this before. At a moving picture I once went to. Ben-Hur, it was called, I remember. And it had a cute little dame in it who was sacrificed to the lions, or something. I remember how it was a story of what took place hundreds and hundreds of years ago. In Rome, I guess, where spaghetti comes from. And how the racers drove horse-carts around a track and the guy that won got the hand of the Emperor's daughter, or something.

Then I take a look at the stands and I see they're just like the stands I saw in the picture. And the people are dressed in dresses just like they'd been in the picture. I had all I could do to swing away from a couple of them there horse-drawn buggies so's I wouldn't smack slam-bang into them.

And I holler out loud, so's it awakened Red Ingram.

"What the blankety-blank am I doing here!" he yelps, which is my sentiments

exactly. I couldn't say a word, then.

RED came out of it kind of slow first. When he saw me, he snarled out, "What the hell you doing driving my car?"

"You're nuts!" I says, "this is my car—the one you tried to ram. Nobody invited you here and if you don't like it, why you can just scram out!"

Red, he's pretty well awake by this time. So he sits up in the seat and starts to look around. At first, he didn't quite see what he was seeing. Then he took kind of a double-take when he saw them there horses pulling the little wagons all around us.

"How'd we get into this circus?" he hollered.

"What circus?" I asks.

"This is a circus, isn't it?" he says again. "The last time I saw horse-drawn chariots was at a circus." Then he took another look around at the people dressed in them funny outfits in the stands. "Hey! What's going on here?" he yells. "I don't get it! Where have you driven me to? What kind of people are they? This a masquerade, or something?"

By this time, we saw that they were all excited around us. The fellows driving the little wagons were giving us a lot of space so's we could pass them up in my racer. And, pretty soon we heard the audience give out with a loud holler, like they do when the winner crosses the line. A guy in one of them long dresses comes out and flag-arms us to a stop. I takes my foot off the accelerator, steps on the brake-pedal and brings the bus to a squealing stop right in front of the guy.

Then he starts to jabber at us in a funny lingo that don't sound like good old American to me a-tall. Pretty soon a mess of other folks, all dressed like this first guy, came crowding around the car jabbering like mad and throwing their arms around Red and me and pulling at our coveralls. Then they lifts us both out of the car and carries us on their shoulders across the field to where a lot of highclass muckymucks are sitting around waiting for us.

Red hollers over to me from where he was bobbing up and down on shoulders, "Can you tell me where we are?"

"You can search me!" I hollers back at him.

So, as long as they were happy about us and weren't making any passes at us, I figures the best thing we can do is to let things ride and see what happens. And I hollered back as much to Red.

THEY carry us up some stairs and into one of the big grandstand boxes. You could see there were quality folks there on account of they were all dressed in silk and gold and they stank to high heaven of perfume. There was one guy sitting on a gold chair that was higher than all the other chairs so's he was sitting way up above the rest. A lot of gorgeous babes was laying around him on sofas. And a couple or three colored boys were waving big fans behind him.

I couldn't savvy none of the lingo that was being thrown around me but, from what they were hollering, I guess this big shot's name was Octavian or something. He didn't look like no big shot. He was kind of short and there were brown liver-spots all over his face. His teeth were all crooked and rotten. He must've suffered from colds on account of he sneezed a lot, and whenever he did he booted one of the colored boys in the fanny for waving his fan too much. I found out why I smelled so much perfume when I got a sniff of him. He had a straw hat on to keep off the sun and there was a wreath of leaves around his brown

hair. His eyes, though, were big and shiny and you could see he was one of those cold, tough mugs.

Anyhow, he says something and we were let down from the shoulders of the guys that was carrying us. Someone pushed Red and me down on our knees in front of this guy Octavian and forced us to bow our heads. Then he bends over and lays one of them there green wreathes of leaves on my head and another on Red's head. And. at that, the whole grandstand give a cheer that like to bust my eardrums.

"What's it all about?" Red whispers to me.

"I guess it's for winning the race," I says.

"That all we get?"

"We're lucky we ain't getting more," I says. I don't like the looks of things. They just don't look kind-faced to me.

Someone give us another shove which meant we was to get up to our feet again. For a while, we stand there struck dumb. We don't say from nothing. On account of there ain't nothing I can say which these boys would understand. But after we was given a couple of jabs in the back, I just couldn't take it no longer and I hollers out:

"What in gehenna is this here place?"

That's all I said, honest. But, from the way we was rough-housed after that, you'd have thought I called that there Octavian every dirty name I could think of. On account of they all began to holler and this here Octavian he gives out with some kind of orders and before we knew what was happening to us, they'd thrown a mess of iron chains around our wrists and ankles and we was dragged out of the box and into the street.

WE wound up in some kind of hoosegow. They took the chains off us and shoved some bread and water into the cell. Then they left us alone. I says, "Look, Red! Is what's happening to me happening to you also?"

"I think so," he says kind of stupid like.

"What I want to know," I says, "is what's happened to us, where are we and where do we go from here?"

"I ain't no Quiz Kid," Red answers.

"O.K." I says, "let's you and me sit down on the floor and try and figure this here thing out." I squats down and starts in to exercise my think-tank. Red he does the same thing, and in a couple of minutes we're both hitting our brains on all six.

"Look," I says, "we was both driving our cars at the Indianapolis Speedway, wasn't we?"

Red nodded his head. "Yeh," he says, "so what?"

"So this. You try to sideswipe me. I don't give way. I go for you. You go for me. We hit. All of a sudden we're choking with smoke. We both go out like lights. And when we come to, we're here."

"Where's here?"

"All I know," I says, "is here ain't in the United States. But how did we get here?"

"The smoke must've had something to do with it," Red says.

"How? It was only ordinary exhaust smoke and . . ." Then, before I could finish what I was going to say, an idea hits me like a ton of bricks. And, the minute it did, I hollered out, "Futsy!"

"Futsy what?"

"Futsy Dugan," I says.

"What's Futsy Dugan got to do with our being here?"

"Futsy invented that there new oil I had in my racer's tank. He was up to the ears in all kinds of chemicals, like he says. And he comes up with

this here new mixture which he says it would drive my Diesel power-plant with a super-duper mixture. So I had him put the stuff in my tank for the race."

"How could the exhaust from an oil mixture get us here?"

We didn't get no reason explaining how, from what happened next. But it certainly proved that it was the new oil mixture. On account of right in front of our eyes we sees some funny things happening. First we hears a clank, like as if a pair of pliers had fallen on the stone floor. We looks down to where the clank come from. And there was nothing there. But, all of a sudden, like as if it was coming out of the air, we seen a pair of steel pliers come to life. I picks them up and, sure enough, I sees that they're my pliers—the exact same ones I thought someone had lifted from my garage.

Then the same thing happens again and again. And, in no time, there was a heap of tools on the floor and there were all my tools that I thought had been swiped.

"Sure!" I hollers, "it was Futsy Dugan's new oil mixture that done it! All these here tools disappeared just when Futsy was working on his new oil. The fumes from the oil must've made them disappear like it made us disappear and now they're coming back to life just like we come back to life!"

"I just don't get it!" Red says. "What has Futsy's new oil mixture got to do with making us and these tools to disappear?"

"I don't get it neither," I says, "but we ain't in the good old U.S.A. And these here tools ain't in the good old U.S.A. It must've been Futsy's oil mixture that done it!"

"Done what?" Red says.

"I dunno!" I says.

And, with that, we shut up and waited for something to happen.

COUPLE or three days later, a guy came into our cell and started in flinging a lot of foreign lingo at us. 'Course we don't savvy and we tell him as much.

"No spikky English?" I asks him.

He says something which, as far as we were concerned, didn't mean nothing a-tall.

So, comes another day and another guy comes in and he shoots us a line of "spik" stuff we don't savvy. Altogether, about a dozen guys come in, each with a different lingo and they like to drive us nuts. I see that we're getting nowhere fast so I takes the last guy aside and I says, "Look! as long as you guys don't talk our language, how about you teaching us a thing or two about your language?"

He don't get me a-tall. So I picks up a piece of bread and I points at it. All of a sudden, a light comes in the guy's mug and he says something in his lingo which meant bread. I says it after him and Red, he says it after me so's, in no time, we was able to say a lot of words in this guy's language.

"Heck!" says Red, after we learned what "bread," and "water" and "clothes" and all was, "let's us learn some words we can really make use of."

"Like what?" says I.

"Like 'dame,' for instance," says Red. "As long as we're going to stay here for a while, let's us learn how to say 'you're some cutie!' or 'how's about you an' me steppin' out t'night, honey?' "

He had something there all right.

Weeks later we knew a lot of words and also it was about that time we found out where we was. It seems like, in some crazy way, we was back in the time of the Caesars in Italy. The way Red figures it out, we was back to the year 31 B. C. which it was about 1973 years back. How we got back that far

is beyond me. That there oil of Futsy's must have had something to do with it. Whatever it was, there was me and Red Ingram thrown back in history with my Diesel special and some tools.

It seems that this here Octavian guy was the dictator of Rome. And him and a guy named Marc Antony was feuding it on account of Antony, who was in Alexandria, Egypt, with a gal named Cleopatra. And he was handing out all kinds of kingdoms and countries which belonged to Rome to this here Cleopatra who was the Queen of Egypt. So the Roman Senate declared war on Antony and they was fixing up a big army to go over to Egypt and learn Antony and Cleopatra a lesson.

ONE day, when Red and me was laying around in our cell wondering what was going to happen to us, a guy comes in with a lot of Roman togas, which is what they call the night-gowns they use for clothes.

"I ain't gonna put one of them things on!" Red says. "Not for a million Octavians!"

"Yeh!" I says. "Just think of what would happen if a good wind come up and blowed them things over our heads!"

So we don't put them things on and we follows the guy in our dirty, greasy coveralls. We gets into one of them there chariots we raced against when we first come to Rome and, pretty soon, we're high-balling it down the street behind four black horses. Me, I'd ruther be driving behind the wheel of my good old Diesel. But we got to Octavian's palace anyhow.

We was took up a long flight of marble stairs, through a lot of marble corridors, which they looked like the basement rooms in railroad stations back home. There was soldiers all around with shiny helmets and swords and spears and you could see that these here dictators was all the same; always being afraid they was going to be bumped off.

Pretty soon, we was standing in front of this guy Octavian. He was sitting at a big table with a lot of papers and maps spread around. And there was a mob of guys—generals, I guess—hanging all around him yes-manning him to high heaven. We see it's the same guy that was in the box at the races. From the looks of him, there was no monkey-shining him. Either you gave him what he wanted or he took it away from you.

"Where do you come from?" he asks us.

"The good old United States!" says I.

Octavian t h i n k s hard. "United States?" he asks, "and where might that be? We Romans rule the entire world. But, at no time, have I heard of the United States." He turned to one of the men around him, a guy with a long, white beard, and he says, "Marcellus, you are a geographer. Where are these United States this man talks about?"

Well, sir, there was a mob of them white-bearded guys there and, pretty soon they gets into a squabble about where they think the United States is. Until pretty soon Octavian he shushes them up and says to us, "What matters it where you come from. Now you are my prisoners. But I understand you arrived in some sort of infernal machine that runs without horses. Are you magicians that you can drive your chariot without horses?' "

Red and me try to explain to him how my Diesel runs on oil. But we don't make much headway. "Look," I says, "suppose you take a ride with me in my Diesel? That'd show you what happens. How about it, huh?"

The other guys set up a holler about that. One guy hollers that it was a fake and we was enemies come to kidnap Octavian. But this here Octavian, he's a tough mug. He says, "Very well. I shall take a ride in this fire-chariot with you. But I sall have my knife pointed at your heart in the event anything happens."

SO, TO make a long story short, we was all taken out to the chariot race-track where my Diesel was still standing where we'd left it after we'd won the chariot race. I steps into the seat and shoves my foot on the accelerator. The motor started up with a roar that nearly scared the togas off the bunch of generals and politicians that had come out with us to see the fireworks. Then Red piles in with me and Octavian was helped in between us. Sure enough, he's got a wicked-looking dagger in his mitt and he sticks it into my side like as if to remind me that I was not going to pull any fast ones on him.

I lets out the clutch and we was off around the track going ninety miles an hour with Octavian's toga flying in the wind. He had on his sun-hat which he always wore, I learned, on account of he was always getting colds and sneezing. But he don't have that on for long and it goes flying off. Well, we goes around that there track like that for about five minutes. And all the time I see this Octavian he's getting a swell kick out of it. But, pretty soon he tells me to stop. I stop smack in front of where the generals was standing and Octavian gets out, a mite shaky in the joints.

"Amazing!" he hollers out, "we must use this fire-chariot in our coming campaign against Antony. With a chariot such as this, we can drive through the enemy phalanxes as though they were made of butter!" Then he turns to us. "I hereby commission you as officers in the service of Rome. Are you willing to swear allegiance to us and aid us in our fight against Antony?"

Red and me we goes into a huddle. "Heck," says Red, "what can we lose if we join up with this mob? They got us coming and going. If we say no, they'll slap us in the hoosegow again and maybe bump us off. If we say yes, we'll have a swell chance to use that lingo we've been learning on some of the babes."

While we was driving through the streets, we'd both seen a lot of skirts there which they wasn't bad to look at. So, I says, "It's O.K. with me!"

RIGHT after we enlisted, we went into training. First thing was a feast which Octavian threw in our honor. I tell you I ain't never seen such goings on before in my whole life—and I seen plenty goings on, if you ask me. There was a long table full of food and wines. And a long line of slaves come in all the time carrying whole suckling pigs, and humming-bird's tongues, and fish and chicken and more fruit and more wine. And there was a place outside the banquet hall which you went to with a feather if you was filled up and you wanted to make room for more eats and drinks. But, best of all, there was a mob of gals laying around on silk couches with nothing on but a smile.

When Red catches sight of the dames, he lets out a whoop and a holler. Me, I go for the eats first on account of all we been eating for the past few weeks was bread and water. But I look over to where Red was working his claim and I tell you, I don't know how he did it, but there he was gabbing with three of them squatting around him, like as if he was a Roman matinee idol.

Me, I got my eye on a little black-

haired, black-eyed little piece of loving, that's at his right. And she saw me giving her the once-over and she shoots me a glad-eye that was as nice a dessert as I could have wanted.

Pretty soon, she's over to where I am and we're as chummy as a couple of sewing sisters. She tells me her name is Cytheris and I tell her my name is Hank. I pulls a boner and asks her for her phone-number.

"Phone-number?" she asks, "what is this phone-number?"

I laugh when I remember they don't have such things like telephones in Rome in 32 B.C. But, outside of that slip, we got along fine until we're interrupted by Red.

"What's the big idea snatching my skirt?" he yells at me.

"Go do your washing!" I snaps back.

"Oh yeah!" he says, which it don't mean nothing.

"Yeah!" I says, which it means the same.

So Red, he goes back to where he left the other two dames. Pretty soon I feel like as if I got to go out and see a man about a dog. And I do. But when I come back, I see this here Cytheria necking like mad with Red. I was just about ready to jump in and beat up on that red-headed double-crosser, when, what goes staggering across the floor to him but a great big Roman general named Lucius. You could see he had been soaking up a little too much wine. Anyhow, he goes over to where Red is playing tick-tack-toe with this skirt and he sticks his mug into Red's and hollers, "You have stolen my wife from me, sir!" And without waiting for an explanation, he hangs a haymaker smack on Red's jaw.

NOW, Red, he ain't no slouch when it comes to handling himself in a brawl. But this here Lucius had been one of them arena gladiators. He had fought with knucks in hundreds of fights and had come through them alive. So Red was up against some pretty tough opposition. But Red jumps up with his nose slightly bloody and starts in mauling it with Lucius.

I see they're having a swell time. Then I see one of Lucius' men stick his leg out and trip up Red so's he goes down to the floor on his ear. That don't set so well with me on account of we Americans have got to stick together even if we hate each other's guts like Red and me. So I jumps up and clouts the guy that trips up Red one on the schnozzle. That brings up some of the wine he'd drunk and it pours out of his nose. So, pretty soon Red and me is both back to back clouting it out with Lucius and six of his aide de camps.

"I'm enjoying myself for the first time!" Red hollers at me.

"Me, too!" I hollers just as I land a lulu on Lucius' cauliflower ear. I took it all back when I got a nasty smack on the kisser right afterwards. But I made up for it by swinging a short right on another guy's button that sent him out for the count.

So, pretty soon the other guys began to itch for some action, some taking our side and some taking Lucius' side. And, in no time, with the girls squealing in the back like stuck pigs, we were all going at it strong in one of the best slam-bang, knock-'em-down battle-royals it's ever been my pleasure to be in.

But that don't last long. On account of, pretty soon, the Roman cops come barging in and Red and me were thrown out on our ears in the street.

I looks at Red. Both his eyes were blacked, blood was pouring out of his nose and his clothes were just torn to shreds. "See what you get for trying to snatch my girl!" I says to him.

He looks at me and laughs. "You didn't get away with murder neither, you wolf!" he says and spits out a tooth.

So we gets up out of the curb, throws our arms around each other and goes down the street singing.

"Mademoiselle from Armentiers, parley-voo."

That's how we spent the next few weeks training as the first tank-men in the world for Octavian's Roman Legions—if you know what I mean.

MEANWHILE, things were happening between Octavian and Marc Antony. It seems like Antony had got together an army of about 100,000 foot soldiers and 12,000 horse soldiers and 300 ships. And all Octavian could round up was 250 ships, 80,000 foot soldiers, 12,000 horse soldiers and a tank battalion of one Diesel-powered racing special automobile. Antony and Cleopatra had their army scattered all around the Mediterranean Sea with a big camp in Patrae in Greece. Octavian had his men at Brindisi in Italy with 200 miles of Ionian Sea water separating the two armies.

Red and me was shipped down to Brindisi from Rome together with the other soldiers and we were acting as chauffeurs for Octavian. That's how come we knew so much about what was going on. That's how come we found out about the letter Octavian wrote to Antony telling him he'd let Antony land his men in Italy without trying to stop him, so's they could fight it out in a deciding battle. Antony, he don't take to the idea and he sends back another letter daring Octavian to come over to Greece and decide the thing in a man-to-man fight, even though he was getting old. Of course, Octavian don't take him up on account of, from what I hear, this Marc Antony guy ain't no slouch at duels. Then Antony writes back and dares Octavian to bring his army over to Greece where they could fight it out on the plains of Pharsalia. But Octavian ain't biting at the same bait he held out for Antony. So the winter of 32 B.C. drags along that way with nothing happening except with Octavian standing in Italy and glaring across the Ionian Sea at Greece and Marc Antony standing in Patrae glaring across the Ionion Sea at Italy. Course, Antony has got it easier on account of he's got Cleopatra with him and, from what I hear, she'd make even a stretch at the North Pole feel like a vacation in Perdition—if you get what I mean.

"Heck!" says Red one time to Octavian when we're driving him around, "why don't you land us some night in Greece with our Diesel-racer and a couple-three men and we'll smack the pants off Antony's whole army!"

But Octavian don't take to that idea. The way I figure it out, he's in the war for the glory and whatever glory there'd be wouldn't be his if we did the knocking out. Besides, he's got a whole army hanging around itching to get into a brawl and they were all tough babies and they were getting in his hair, already asking when they were going to get into some action. Then, I don't think he trusts Red and me much. It's on account of that Lucius which Red bopped on account of he objected to Red's making passes at his wife. It seems like Lucius is telling Octavian a lot of guff about Red and me and I guess Octavian wasn't taking no chances letting us get out of his sight.

WELL, the winter dragged on thataways with nothing much happening. Finally, Octavian gets word that Antony's winter supplies was running out and that a lot of his men had died

of disease. So, thinks Octavian, now's a good chance to do some attacking. So, he orders us on board a ship with a lot of other soldiers and we takes off for Methone in the south of Greece under the command of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa.

When Red and me come roaring down the gangplank from our ship, we like to scare the pants off of the Egyptian and Greek soldiers that was there. They must've thought the gods was sending fire-wagons or something. Anyhow, we run a mess of them down and, in no time, Methone was ours and Octavian had captured a beach-head in Greece where he could land his army.

But a funny thing happened during the fighting for that beach-head. You see, this here Lucius was one of the generals that come with us. And he was on a horse and we was in our Diesel. And smack in the thick of the fighting, who should come bearing down on us waving his sword but this here guy Lucius. Red and me is busy running guys down and swinging our swords at other soldiers so we don't get to see Lucius until he's kind of close up. First thing we know, a long spear comes whizzing between Red and me and lands on the dashboard of the car. I look around and who do I see grinning at us but this Lucius guy. We knew he had it in for us bad on account of the brawl and also on account of we was seeing more of Octavian than he was. So I hollers to Red, "That Lucius is on the war-path for us!"

Red turns and sees Lucius bearing down on us with his sword waving. I guess his idea was to give it to us behind our backs and then claim that we were killed in the battle. But that don't go so good with us. Thinks I, this ain't no time for us to be killed on account of may be soon we'll be wanting to get back to the good old U.S.A. And how could we get back alive if we were knocked off in Greece in 32 B.C.?

So, quick as a flash, I swings the Diesel around. Now we were face to face with Lucius and he's still coming at us on his horse swinging his sword.

"Do we give it to this guy, Red? I holler.

"Let her go, Gallagher!" he hollers back.

So, closing my eyes, I steps hard on the accelerator and the old Diesel gives a roar and shoots out from where we was eighty miles an hour. I tell you when we smacked into Lucius and his horse, I thought the end was beginning sure enough. There was pieces of horse and man flying all around us. But we come through it all right with only a bent fender and a dented radiator which it started to leak but which we plugged up afterwards.

Anyhow, stead of stopping after we got rid of that Roman menace, Red and me kept on going with our racer. No telling what would happen to us if some of the other guys had seen us run down and massacre the famous general, Lucius. Like as not we'd get our heads chopped off or something. So, Red says to me as we're driving along the road going out of Methone:

"What's this I hear about Egyptian dames?"

"If they're anything like Cleopatra," I says, "me for 'em!"

So we keeps on driving scaring all the people on the road. I says, "It don't make no difference who we fight with as long as we get some fun out of doing it."

WELL, pretty soon we run out of oil and the Diesel comes snorting to a stop just outside Marc Antony's camp at Patrae. In no time, there was a mob of Egyptian and Greek soldiers around us. First they kind of hung away

thinking we was gods or something on account of we come rolling in without there being no horses pulling us. But, pretty soon, they seen we was only men like them and they come up to us.

"Where's Marc Antony?" I hollers out to them in my best grammar, which it ain't so hot.

I guess they savvy a little of it on account of they drags us out of the car and starts in pulling us to the center of the camp rough-housing us a little. But, pretty soon, we come up to a big striped silk tent. There was a mess of guards hanging around and one of the big-shots came up to us and asks what we want.

"We wanna talk with Marc Antony!" we says.

So they takes us into the tent. And, sure enough, we recognize this guy Antony sitting at a table surrounded by generals and maps and stuff. We knew it was him on account of we'd heard so much about him from the Romans. And he was all they'd said he was. I ain't never seen such a mountain of a man before. He had heavy, brown hair curling around his head. And his eyes were honest eyes, clean clear through and not like the sneaky eyes of that runt Octavian. And his muscles! I ain't never seen such a display of muscle outside a circus. And he had a thick neck and a strong jaw, the kind that told you that when he wanted something, he got it. Now, he was getting kind of flabby, you could see and there was a little pot belly around his middle. But he still had some pretty slim flanks, like an athlete and his legs was like a runner's. All I could say was that this gal Cleopatra was a good picker.

Anyhow, Antony, he sizes Red up and down like as if to say, "Why has this scum been brought to me?" The soldiers, they explain to him what had happened and when they told him about our horseless chariot, why he liked to split a gut the way he jumped up from his chair.

"What foul lies are you telling me!" he hollers out. And then he says to us, "If you speak Tuscan, I wish you'd tell me what these apes are talking about! What about this horseless chariot they've been dreaming up?"

"Now, there's a guy that talks our language!" Red says to me. "That's the kind of man I don't mind fighting for and with!"

And I explain to Antony all about my Diesel racer. Then I says, "You see, we come across with Octavius' men and . . ."

"What?" he jumps up and hollers.

"With Octavius' men," I continues, "and they just took your city of Methone which they're going to use for a bridge-head!"

Well, that's the first news he'd gotten of that affair on account of we'd been the first to come this way with our speedy racer. And, boy, was he mad! He starts in to order his generals around swearing at them like a sailor, asking why they hadn't let him know about things. Then he turns to us and hollers, "Can you take me to Methone in your horseless chariot?"

Right off, his generals objected, like the generals of Octavian, saying maybe it was all a plot and we'd come to kidnap him. But this Antony guy, he ain't afraid of nobody, plot or no plot.

"What about it, men?" he asks.

"Well," I says, "we run out of oil, but my Diesel will use any kind of oil—olive, banana or what have you."

"Good!" he says, "prepare to leave for Methone immediately. Sound the order for marching!" he yells at his generals, "we're off to do battle with Octavian at Methone!"

But we don't get going to Methone on account of, just then, a messenger

comes running in and he throws himself at Antony's feet. And he pants out, "The enemy has arrived at Corcyra, Lord! at the Gulf of Ambracia!"

WELL, that was news. The affair at Methone, it seems was just a feint by Octavian. His real purpose was to get his men to the north instead of to the south. So Antony gets the generals to sound the order anyhow. And, pretty soon, we fill up the Diesel with olive-oil which is around these parts like water. And Anthony climbs into the seat next to me and Red. When the army is ready, we shoot out in front and get going north to Corcyra.

We left all the horse chariots and footmen way behind. On the way, Antony tells us all about how he's got his fleet in the Gulf of Ambracia and how, if he don't get there on time, why Octavian will come up with his fleet and knock Antony's ships to hell-and-gone.

"I'll get you to your fleet quicker'n you can shake a stick at a cat!" I says. And, with that, I shoves my foot down hard on the accelerator and the old bus shoots out like as if she'd been on an olive-oil diet all her life. All the way down, Antony asks us questions about how the Diesel runs and all. And I can see he's got the same ideas about using it for a kind of tank like Octavian had.

"Cleopatra'll love this chariot!" he says. "I think I'll give it to her for a present!" Course, it don't matter with him if the diesel belongs to me. That's the kind of a guy he is. I heard later how, once, he gave his cook a big house in Magnesia, on account of the cook rustled up a swell supper. Only trouble was the house belonged to someone else. But that was Marc Antony all over.

Red, he's busy with Antony getting him to spill the beans about the dame situation in Egypt and Greece. And what this Antony guy don't know about dames just ain't worth knowing—if you get what I mean. He was a walking telephone-book. He had them listed in his head—all sizes and shapes and all color and so forth. "Wow!" hollers Red, "I see where you and me is going to do some tall soldiering around these here parts! Come on, guy!" he urges, "get this old buggy of yours going so's we can get this thing over with and we can reap the rewards of our heroism!"

TO MAKE a long story short again, we got to the Gulf of Ambracia in no time. Antony gets aboard his fleet of ships and got them ready for battle. Meantime, his army comes up and he fills the ships with a mess of soldiers. And when Octavian sent his spies out to find out about the lay of the land—or the water—they sees what's up and they go back and report as how Antony is all prepared for them and they'd better not try any funny business with the fleet. I guess if Octavian had known how Antony had got up to the Gulf on time, he'd of had a fit.

So, there was the two armies again. glaring at each other across the water. This time, though they was both on the same land. The water was the Gulf of Ambracia with Octavian's armies at the north end and Antony's armies at the south end. Both of them was waiting for something to happen.

Something did happen to us, as far as we were concerned. Cleopatra came visiting Antony's camp. And if that ain't something that can happen to a guy, then I just don't know what I'm talking about. For, as we were waiting around hoping for something to happen, Antony gets an idea he'd like to go out on a good drunk. That, of course, fits in with me and Red's ideas. So he orders up a binge the like of which I ain't never seen or heard of in all my born days. Wowie! There was enough

liquor guzzled down that evening to sink a fleet of Octavian's ships. And the food! And the women!

But if we thought the women at that party was the nuts, we had another think coming. For, right in the middle of that blow-out, in steps a dame that almost knocked your eye out for beauty. We was laying around on a couch slopping up the wine and stuff. Antony was taking care of himself, too. Then, all of a sudden, he sees this dame coming in the tent.

"Cleopatra!" he hollers out and when he jumps up to run to her three swell dancing dames fall off to the floor from his knees.

I got one and Red got the other two. But we was all eyes for Cleo. She was one of them little women, you know, the kind that makes a nice little armful. Her face was as white as snow and as smooth as a baby's you know what. And her hair was dark and her eyes was big and black and her nose was just big enough to fit into the rest of her face.

But it was her voice that made you look at her and wonder how long she'd been going on. It was soft and low and when she talked to you it was like as if she was stroking your cheek with one hand and running her fingers through your hair with the other. Man! When Antony goes up to her and kisses her and hugs her and then tells her about us, and she comes up to us and talks—I tell you, I was ready to lay down, kick my legs and holler, "Lordy! You can take me! I've seen everything there is to see!"

"What is this Antony has been telling me about your horseless chariot?" she asks me.

ALL I can do for a while is stutter, she's got me that buffaloed. Then I tells her all about how we come here and all about our Diesel. And she acts like a little kid with a toy and she's all for going out then and there for a ride in the Diesel. And Antony, he don't act like a tough soldier no more, when she's around. He becomes just as much a kid as she is and he's all for taking a ride out in the road with her. So, right then and there, Antony and me and Cleo, we ducks the party and, pretty soon we're high-balling it down the road with Cleo's hair flying in the wind. We was going close on to 75 miles an hour, just easing along for a racer like my Diesel. But Cleo, she's got speed in her blood and she yells out, "Faster! Faster!"

So I steps on the accelerator and gets her up to 95. But even that ain't fast enough for Cleo and she keeps on hollering "Faster! Faster!"

Well, I got her up to about 125 and that was as fast as my Diesel could go on olive-oil, which I'm telling you ain't no banana-oil. And she loves it! She just laps it up. I tell you, I could of gone for that woman like a ton of bricks. But when you came up against a guy like this here Marc Antony, you just don't think things like that. You just forget all about it and look around for the next best.

Anyhow, we drove back to the camp and Antony tells her all about how we drove him to the gulf in time to warn the fleet and save them from Octavian. And, for that, Cleo bends over, right there in front of Antony and Red and all, and she plants a kiss smack on my lips!

I guess I must of passed out right then and there. On account of I don't remember what happened after that. All I know is that I thought I was floating on clouds and there was happy music playing and . . . shucks! All I can say is I felt like as if I was in heaven and let it go at that.

WELL, there we was now, working for Antony and Cleopatra. Course, we didn't have much to do on account of there wasn't any fighting going on. It seems like Octavian's fleet had Antony's fleet bottled up in the harbor and we had Octavian's land army surrounded on land. So neither of them could do anything but wait.

But Octavian was pretty hep to handling things like that. First off, he sends out a small army to cut off our water supply. But we gets wind of that and we drive out with Antony. And all Octavian's men had was horses. So Red and me and Antony, we sends the old Diesel smack through the middle of them men on horses and scattered 'em like as if they was chickens on the road. Another time, when Anthony was away with Cleopatra and me on a joy ride, one of the Roman generals, a guy named Titius, he surprised a bunch of our cavalry and defeated them. Then, some time later, Octavian's admiral, Agrippa, he snuck up in the dark and captured a few of our ships which they were cruising around for want of anything else to do.

It was things like this that sort of got under Antony's skin. Besides, Cleo was sort of acting up fighting it out with Antony and his generals. I guess she must have seen that the big boy was on the down-grade or something. Anyhow, she wasn't as warm to him as she had been before. And, sometimes, I could hear them in their tent fighting through the night. It seems that she was in favor of trying to break Octavian's blockade with their fleet while Antony and his generals was in favor of fighting Octavian first by land.

"Why," I heard her say, "if we can defeat Octavian's ships and break the blockade, nothing can stop us from going straight across to Italy and capturing Rome, itself! It's worth trying!"

But Antony's generals they don't think so. And they tell Antony he'll lose the whole shebang if he tries to buck up against Octavian's fleet first.

"What's a woman doing around a soldiers' camp anyhow?" the generals hollered. "Send her back to Alexandria where she belongs so's we can take care of this man's business in a man's way!"

Finally, they convinced Antony he should tell her off and send her back to her knitting. But they don't know much about this Cleo if they think she is so easily taken care of. I was hanging around their tent after I had driven Antony there. I guess he must've told her what the generals told him to tell her on account of, all of a sudden, I heard her give out with a yell that must've been heard by Octavian all the way across the gulf.

"You're a weak-spined tunny-fish!" I heard her yell at him. "You may have been a warrior when I first met you, but now you're only a weakling under the thumb of your so-called generals. Why, it was I who supplied all the money for your campaigns; I gave you the ships; I gave you the soldiers. And what do I receive in return? A shell of a man; a weakling! A dolt! A fool! A knave!"

That went on for a long time. Finally, she quieted down and, pretty soon, Antony came out of the tent like a whipped dog with its tail between its legs. He hopped into the racer next to me and says, "Take me to some liquor real fast!"

I steps on her and, pretty soon he's drowning his sorrows in drink. Me, I ain't got no special sorrows, but I helps him drown his. Soon, Red come up and joined the party. And he had some pretty Egyptian girls with him and we all had a swell time.

But we made plans to attack Octavian's ships. Which it should give you some idea about the kind of dame this Cleopatra was.

WELL, that was the beginning of the end for Marc Antony. When he tells his generals about his decision, they was plenty mad. But they were loyal to Antony and they were soldiers, so they stuck with him. All except one guy named Domitius Ahenobarbus who run off to Octavian's camp. But it didn't do him no good on account of, just when he got there, he kicked the bucket from fever.

Then things began to happen. You see, Octavian's ships had bottled up Cleo's Egyptian fleet and Antony's ships in the bay while Antony's soldiers had surrounded Octavian's men on land. Antony figures if he can attack on sea, he can break the blockade and let Cleo and her ships out of the trap so's they can get back to Alexandria, Egypt. Then he could settle Octavian's hash on land. The whole idea, as far as I could see it, was to get rid of Cleo who was getting to be a pain in the neck to everyone concerned, including Antony.

So Antony puts a mess of soldiers on board his boats and he gets on his flagship while Cleo, she gets on hers. And Antony sets the date of the beginning of the battle for August 29. A storm come up so the battle had to be put off. But on September 2nd, everything looked hotsy-totsy for a war and Antony, he says as how he thinks today's the day. He sends a half of this three hundred ships out front in one fleet, the second half in the second fleet and Cleo winds up in the back with her sixty Egyptian ships. The whole idea being that the first two fleets'll blow open a path for Cleo's ships so they could high-tail it back to Egypt.

The last thing Cleo and Antony said to each other before they went to their flag-ships was insults. I was standing by with Red and my Diesel to drive Antony down the beach to his flagship.

"You're a fool and a coward!" Cleo flings at Antony, "and you're going to desert me now as you did before!"

"I love you!" Antony says.

"Yah!" Cleo snorted, "I hope I never see you again!" And, with that, she runs off to her boat that's waiting to take her to her flagship.

Antony, he looks at her kind of sad-like, as if he don't know what's going on. That's what love can do for a man which is why I ain't never got hitched. Anyhow, he heaves a deep sigh and hops on the Diesel.

"Let's us get going to battle!" he hollers at me, "and the sooner the quicker! I'm tired of all this la-de-la business with females!"

So we shoots off down the beach for his flagship and, pretty soon, we're on board, Diesel and all, and we're all set to do battle with Octavian's ships.

Say, you should of seen the kinds of warships those fellows had to fight with. They was rowed by slaves in the hold with big oars, when there was no wind up to blow the sails. And there was big brass spikes and rams at the head of each ship which they was used to but into another ship to sink her, like a billy-goat butting another goat. And there was hundreds and hundreds of soldiers on each boat with spears and swords waiting for the boat to ram an enemy boat so's they could climb over and fight with the other soldiers. And, on the shore, Antony had a lot of what he called catapults which they heaved great big rocks and fire-balls onto Octavian's ships.

WELL, anyhow, the fight started with Antony sending his first

fleet of 150 ships out to do battle with Octavian's ships. They clashed head on and was there a hullabaloo. But, funny thing, although Antony's boats was bigger, Octavian's boats was winning on account of I guess they could maneuver around better.

Our flagship then went into the fray, and pretty soon there was Octavian's little ships all around us. Once we rammed smack into one of them and the water was full of soldiers hollering and screaming. We heard the crunch of oars breaking. Spears came shooting all around our ears and fire-balls landed on deck and we was all pretty well bushed putting out fires and dodging spears and such.

I'm standing near Antony and he's watching how his ships are being taken one by one. He's also wondering what'll happen to his land forces if they find out the fleet's been put on the blink. And he's also got an eye on Cleo's flagship wondering what she's going to do, if she's going to command her ships to fight or to run away to Egypt.

Meanwhile, the battle's going pretty bad for Antony's ships and they're being sunk and boarded and captured. Then, all of a sudden, Antony looks out and sees that Cleo's ship has raised sail.

"She's taking advantage of the wind!" he hollers.

Sure enough, there was a big wind that had come up and there was Cleo's ship skidding in the breeze right through the hole in the blockade Antony's ships had made.

"Up with the sails!" Antony hollers.

"You're not going to run away from this here battle," I hollers.

"My wife's life is in danger!" he says. And, with that, he forgets all about the battle and stands at the head of the ship as the sailors raise the sails. And, pretty soon, we're high-tailing out of that there battle following Cleo's boat. I guess Antony's goose was cooked right then and there. If he'd stayed and fought, maybe there would have been a chance to win. But, no! he's got a woman on his mind and that don't go good with fighting.

Pretty soon we're pretty well out of the battle zone. Our ship was bigger'n Cleo's on account of we had five banks of slaves rowing like mad with bigger sails for the wind to blow on. So we catch up with Cleo's ship and we boards her.

Cleo's cold to Antony and he's cold to her. And all he done was to sit on the front of the ships with his head buried in his hands like as if he was crying. I guess he had plenty of reason to on account of he'd run away from a battle and left all his men in the lurch.

I goes up to him once or twice with some wine and stuff. But he don't say boo. All he does is sit there with his head in his hands. While Cleo, she stays put in her cabin and she won't even send out to ask him to come in.

That's how we come to land in Alexandria, Egypt.

That's how come the big battle of Actium was lost by Antony.

All on account of a dame.

WELL, Antony he decides to stay at Paraetonium which it is about 150 miles from Alexandria. Cleo, she starts off for her capitol so's she can find out if anything's happened to her kingdom on account of they lost the battle of Actium.

Antony, he mopes around for weeks. Red and me, we're having a good time, though. You see, Cleo's two waiting girls, they took sick from the voyage and they had to be left behind by Cleo in Paraetonium. Pretty soon, though, they're O.K. So's Red and me. So

these two gals, Charmian and Iras, they're kind of taking a walk on the beach alone. And Red and me, we're taking a walk on the beach alone. And, pretty soon, we ain't alone. Get what I mean?

And all the time Antony is moping around about how he's lost the love of of his life, Red and me we're kind of hitting the high-spots. Red, he takes a shine to this here Charmian, which she's a black-haired charmer with big black eyes and big red lips and . . . you know what I mean so I don't have to describe her no further. Iras, she 's only kind of so-so. Which it naturally means that Red and me we're after one and the same girl and the guy which loses out, he gets the so-so one. Which she ain't half-bad neither.

First off, on the beach, Red sashays up to Charmian, slaps her on the back and says "I'm sure glad you're feeling bright and chipper now."

Charmian, she's kind of glad to see it's us Americans. But she's a woman and the first thing she and her girl-friend want to do is take a ride on the Diesel on account of Cleo's told them so much about how she enjoyed it.

"Let's us take a stroll on the beach!" Red says, "there ain't no fun riding in one of them smoke-wagons!"

But, Charmian, she's got her mind set on getting a joyride.

"Why not take a ride now?" I asks, "I just took on a load of olive-oil and the old bus is just raring to burn up the miles!"

Red, he glares at me like as if he was going to murder me. "I say she's taking a walk on the beach!" he hollers.

"What does the lady say?" I says sweetly.

Charmian looks at Red and then she looks at me and then she looks at the little old Diesel which it's parked down the beach a bit. And she coos and puts her arm in mine. Which it's enough answer for me.

I turns around and flip-cracks back at Red, "So long! second-fiddle!"

And we turns and runs for the Diesel.

Well, that ain't the last I hear from Red on that account. He's got a way with the gals that even a Diesel ain't got much chance with. And, before I know, I find that Charmian is kind of giving him the glad-eye every once in a while. So, one day, Red and me is dressing in the same tent. And Red, he's combing his curly hair and getting himself all prettied up. Which I know there's a dame in the woodpile, somewhere.

"What's on the menu, Red?" I asks kind of innocent-like.

"Wouldn't you like to know?" he throws back.

But I did know. I got my spies out and they'd reported to me that Red had made a date with Charmian and he was prettying up to see her. But I been busy too. Which Red he was soon going to find out.

YOU SEE, Red and me we was dressing like the Romans now with white togas, which they're like bed-sheets wrapped around us. We done this on account of we wanted to save our American clothes so's, if'n we ever got back to civilization, we wouldn't be found in rags or something. Besides, we figures that if we dress like Americans, we're marked men in battle and the enemy'd be out gunning for us right off.

Anyhow, Red he's all ready to go. And, me, I'm laying back on a sofa watching him leave.

"Have a good time!" I hollers.

"Wadda you think?" he flings back. And he goes out of the tent and down the street. Me, I watch him go out. Well, he's about a block down, when,

all of a sudden, something happens to his toga. Part of the bottom kind of falls out. He makes a grab for it, but when he does the part around the shoulder falls off, too. Pretty soon, the whole blamed thing fell off from him and he's standing there in the middle of the street as naked as the day he was born and his face as red as a beet. The whole town is looking at him and the old women they cackled like mad and the men they laughed and Red, he swears bloody murder and starts in running back to our tent.

Pretty soon, he comes in puffing. He sees me laying back innocent-like on the sofa. "Who pulled the threads out of my toga?" he hollers.

"I don't know what you're talking about," I says. "You shouldn't ought to be running around this here town like that."

He gives me a look which it means he ain't quite sure what part I had in it. Then he starts in looking for his American clothes. But he couldn't find them on account of, somehow, right then, they was resting at the bottom of a quiet little pool about a hundred miles away.

"Lemme borrow you're stuff!" he says to me.

"What for?" I says.

"On account of if you don't," he hollers, "I'll pull that there toga smack off you're back!"

"Come and try it!" I says.

And he did.

Well, we had a swell mix-up for the next half-hour. And, when he was done, I'm laying back with an eye blacked and my nose bleeding. But I still had my toga on. And Red, he still ain't got nothing to hide his shame. And he's got a couple of swell black-eyes puffing up. Which they're hardly the right thing to go visiting a lady with, so the etiquette books say.

Anyhow, Red never got to make his date with Charmian.

THAT'S how things go for a long time in Antony's camp. Nothing happens. Antony mopes for Cleo and Cleo stays in Alexandria and won't see him for love or money. Red and me, we try to get Antony out of the dumps. But he ain't got a mind for nothing now that he's lost his Cleo.

But Octavian, he ain't sitting doing nothing. We hear he's been getting a big fleet of ships together and a big army that's coming up through Syria to invade Egypt.

That kind of gets under Antony's skin. I guess it's what they call the last strength coming up in a dying man. Anyhow, he gets a big navy together again and sends them out to contact Octavian's men. But I guess Antony's admirals are getting kind of tired about his mooning around for his queen. So, as soon as they go out to do battle, instead of smacking into the enemy ships, the admirals order the rowers to raise their oars which it means surrender. So the whole danged fleet surrendered to Octavian which it meant that Antony was left without no boats.

That kind of hit Antony where it hurts most. On account of he thinks maybe it was Cleo that had sold him out. Anyhow, he gets together his army and takes off in boats to defend the western frontier of Egypt. But he was chased away and we had a hard time getting him out of that mess alive.

"Let me at the fools!" he hollered in the Diesel. "I'll do battle with them single-handed!"

But Red and me, we knew there was no use. So we stepped on the gas and pulled him out of that fire just in time to keep up from being surrounded and massacred.

We takes Antony back to Alexandria.

There we hear that Octavian's army is at the borders of Egypt and is starting to cross. That means that we'll all have to hole up in Alexandria and wait for Octavian to come up with his legions and try to take it.

Cleo, she's built herself a gorgeous palace and she holes up there and won't let nobody inside but her maids, Charmian and Iras, which they're girlfriends of Red's and me. That's how come I got to know all about what happened.

By this time, Antony was a gone man. He was drunk all the time and just couldn't get it into his noodle that he was all washed up. We heard that Cleo was planning to get him knocked off to save her own skin, but nothing come of that. Maybe it was on account of Red and me was always tailing him to see he wouldn't never get into no trouble.

Then something happened which it proved to me that Antony was one of the swellest guys I ever did meet. All the time we're waiting behind the walls of Alexandria for Octavian's armies to come up and lay siege. Finally, they do come up. So what does Antony do but get together a bunch of tough hombres and us and we got out one night to attack a bunch of Octavian's cavalry. Boy oh boy! was that a fight. We was right in the middle of it all with Antony standing up in the seat and slashing away right and left with his big sword. Man! I ain't never seen so many heads flying in my whole life. And the horses and men we run down in my Diesel! I lost count of them after the first hundred.

WELL, we won that battle all right! And when we went back behind the walls, there was Cleo waiting for us to welcome us. Antony was dressed in his armor which it was full of blood. And he run up to where she was waiting for us. And he threw his arms around Cleo and she threw her arms around him. And Antony, he began to cry, sort of. And I guess I got some sand in my eye, too. And, for that one night, Antony and Cleopatra were together again.

That kind of gave Antony hope. So he got together another mess of soldiers And we all went out of the gate again to do battle. This time, we drove Antony to the top of a high hill where he could watch how the battle was going.

You know what we saw? Why the lousy traitors! Instead of fighting, we saw Antony's generals and men throw away their arms and surrender to Octavian's men. That means the end for Antony of course. And all the way back to Alexandria, he swore at Cleopatra and said he was sure she had sold him out. And when he drove him up to the special tomb she had built, she wouldn't let him in. She had got wind of the big defeat and she had decided to hole up there and see what Octavian would do if he'd take the city.

So we drove Antony back to his headquarters where he got good and drunk this time. I ain't never saw a man so sore as he was. And the drunker he got the madder he got until I was sure he'd bust either from liquor or anger.

All of a sudden, a messenger comes running up to where we was with Antony. He was from Cleo's tomb, he said and he had news of her for Antony.

We let him in and brought him to Antony. "What do you want of me, varlets!" he hollers.

"Here's a messenger from Cleo!" I said.

"I want nothing of her!" he hollers. And, then, he kind of toned down and said, "What does she want of me now?"

"She is dead!" the messenger said.

"What?" Antony roared, "what do you mean?" And he jumped across the room and started to strangle the messenger. When we finally pried him loose from the poor guy, we learned that Cleo had takn poison and was dead in her tomb.

Antony stood still. "What's the use of living now?" he said, "now that my only reason for living is gone?"

Then he gets his man Eros to get his armor. "I'll soon be with Cleopatra," he said. Then when Eros brought the armor, Antony put it on and handed his sword over to Eros.

"You made a promise to me once, Eros," he said. "You promised you'd kill me whenever I ordered you to do so!" And, with that, he opens his breast and waits for Eros to sink the sword into it.

Instead, this guy Eros turns the sword around and sinks it into his own body and falls down dying at Antony's feet.

"You haven't died in vain, Eros!" Antony said. And, before we could stop him, he had turned the sword on himself and fell on it so the point went clear through his stomach. "You have shown me what to do, Eros," he moaned.

BUT he wasn't dead completely and he moaned for us to put him out of his misery. But Red and me, we lifted him up and carried him downstairs. Then I jumped into my Diesel and high-tailed it to the tomb where Cleo had holed herself up in. They wouldn't open up for me at first. But I got Charmian to listen and I told her how Antony was dying. Pretty soon, Charmian comes back and tells me that Cleo wants us to bring her Antony's body.

I gets back to where Antony was laying and Red helps me pile Antony on the Diesel and, pretty soon, we're on the way back to where Cleo is waiting for him. They couldn't get the doors open so I had to climb up the walls and rig up a rope so's we could pull Antony's body up to where Cleo was waiting.

Well, we done that. And did Cleo tear her hair and put on an act of love. She threw herself down on the bed and hugged him and kissed him and called him her lord and master and husband. Naturally, Antony comes to again and the first thing he asks for is a drink of wine. I gets him one and it helps him a little. He tells Cleo to make terms with Octavian. Then, with his last breath, he says,

"I'm glad, at least, that I, the greatest of all Romans, was defeated by a Roman!"

And, with that, he passes out completely.

RED and me hung around after that. Charmian and Iras was kind of upset about things and we thought we'd sort of keep an eye on them and make sure nothing happened. You see, Octavian was already at the gates of Alexandria and he was sure to get to this tomb where Cleo was hiding out.

Sure enough, long about night, we heard the sound of trumpets and marching feet and a great big hullabaloo. And we look out of the windows and there, down on the street, was thousands and thousands of Roman soldiers and, at the head of them all, was Octavian. He hollered that Cleo had better surrender. But she was game to the core and told him if he wanted her then he should come and get her.

That don't set so good with Octavian. He's in Egypt, he knows, so he's got to handle their queen right or else it might stir up trouble. So he sets

a guard around the tomb and goes away leaving us alone.

Meantime, Antony was buried and we drove Cleo to the funeral. Then we drove her back to her tomb. She sure was a changed woman. I guess the funeral must've upset her. That and the rumor she heard that Octavian was going to kill her son Ceasarion and that he was going to capture her, tie her up in chains and take her back to Rome to show her off as his prize. That don't set so well with a queen like Cleo.

Anyhow, she had Charmian and Iras dress her up real pretty when she got back from Antony's grave. Then she had Charmian write out a letter to Octavian asking that her body be buried next to Antony's. I dropped it out of the window to be sent to Octavian.

Then Cleo tells Charmian and Iras she wants to be alone. So they go downstairs where Red and me is waiting to hear what's going on. We pass the time of day for a while with nothing happening. Then, all of a sudden, we hear a scream from upstairs. We all run up and what do we see but Cleopatra laying on the floor dying. It seems like she had smuggled a snake in with some fruit that morning and had put the snake to her bosom and the snake had bit her and now she was dying.

"I'm dying, Egypt, dying," she said. Just then, we hear a noise outside. It was Octavian and his men. When he'd got Cleo's letter, he jumped up and drove out to her tomb to try to stop her from killing herself and taking away the glory he'd planned for himself in Rome.

Well, things started to happen then. I made a grab for Charmian but she'd taken some poison and fell down next to Cleo, dead. Red had gotten ahold of Iras and had ducked out the rear door with her leaving me all alone with the two bodies of those two women. I hears the doors downstairs crash in. I run downstairs to try to make a getaway out the back door. But I see a mass of Roman soldiers there. Then I make a dive to the front door. And who do I see there with all his plug-uglies but Octavian. And standing next to him, as big as life, was that general Lucius whose wife Red had shined up to and who we thought we'd killed a while back.

"Aha!" Octavian hollers out, "look at the rat we have trapped here! the American!"

"The kill is mine!" Lucius says and he makes a dash for me with his sword sticking out in front of him. Me, I'm caught and there's nothing I can do but stand against the wall and wait for that there pig-sticker to come shooting through my body. Closer and closer he came. Then, suddenly, he makes a lunge at me. I ducked and the sword kind of grazed my skull. It brought blood. But it also done something else to me. I don't know what happened after that. On account of everything went black. And I began to hear that funny kind of music like as if it was a million miles away. And my body got lighter and lighter like as if it was a cloud. And, pretty soon, I felt like as if I was nothing.

Then I come to again. And, what do you think? I found myself laying next to my old Diesel smack in the middle of the Indianapolis Speedway. And the crowd was yelling their heads off for blood on account of, I guess, I had been in a smashup.

Well, I rubbed my eyes and looked around for Red. But there was no Red to be seen. I guess it was necessary to get a blow on the head, like I got from Lucius, to get away from 32 B.C. in Rome and get back to the

good ole U.S.A. like I was now.

But, don't worry. Red'll be back soon, if I know Iras. She's one of those gabby gals, you know, the kind that'll drive her man nuts with talk, talk, talk. And then, one day, she'll wind up by throwing something at Red's head when he comes home late one night and tells her he was at a Lodge meeting of the Egyptian Sphinx Benevolent Association or something. And he'll get a blow on the head. So, if you happen to see a guy walking around the Speedway in a toga one of these days, you'll know it's Red.

★ AMAZING ODDITIES ★

PERFECT air safety requires a plane to be able to lose speed without danger, come to a stop in mid-air, and land in a space little larger than itself. That ideal is now being swiftly approached by a *plane without wings!*

Germany developed it, but the United States, quickly beginning research on the basic principles, has already carried it so far as to put it into regular use!

The plane is a helicopter. This is quite different from an autogyro, which is a regular plane plus a set of horizontal windmill blades. The autogyro gets all its forward motion through the standard propeller, even in landing and taking off, and the windmill blades only enable it to ascend or descend more slowly and at a sharper angle. But the new helicopter, *with only two motor-driven rotor propellers over a wingless fuselage,* can rise straight off the ground.

Moreover, merely by changing the angle of the propellers, it can *fly sideways, backwards, or hover motionless in one spot.* Even with the motor dead, it descends slower than a parachute!

In other respects the helicopter already approaches standard planes in performance—with a "ceiling" of 10,000 feet and a speed of 100 miles an hour! But it is its qualities making for safety which interest our government. In Germany, one of these helicopters was flown *inside the exhibition hall!*

That performance spurred this country to pour all its talent and facilities into rotary-wing research. And now a plane of this type is being used at Philadelphia to carry the U. S. Mail from the airport to the *roof* of the post-office!

* * *

ONE of the many things we have to "do without" in this war is cellophane. If you have missed some of the elaborate wrappings on your favorite store items, it may comfort you to know that cellophane is being used to keep dust, germs, and moisture from the food for our soldiers.

The Quartermaster Corps of the United States Army has chosen cellophane as a basic wrapping for its supplies for several reasons. Foods must be protected from the snows and sub-zero temperatures of the Arctic. They must be protected from the sun and heat and high atmospheric humidity of the tropic. And they must be protected against mildew, insects, and vermin. Occasionally, too, supplies may stand exposed on wet beaches until they can be stored—another situation where food for the fighters must be guarded.

So the thin, strong cellulose film was among the materials chosen. Because of its unusual moisture-proof, dust-proof, and contamination-proof properties, and because of its light weight, its transparency, and its easy application, it was given considerable attention by Quartermaster Corps officials and was finally announced to be the choice for effective packaging of emergency rations.

The cellulose film is used extensively on the "K" ration, one of the masterpieces of the Subsistence Laboratory's efforts along the line of "pocket provision." This ration consists of three meals, each in its own package, and weighs altogether about two pounds. These two pounds carry more than 3,700 calories of energy.

The breakfast unit consists of a can of chopped ham and eggs, a fruit bar (a blend of apples, apricots, prunes, and raisins), two packages of biscuits (of special Army formula), an envelope of quickly dissolving coffee, three lumps of sugar, a stick of gum, and four cigarettes.

The cellophane enters the breakfast picture as follows:

The fruit bar and each package of biscuits may be individually wrapped in cellophane. These, plus the foil envelope of coffee, the sugar, and the chewing gum, are all enclosed in a seal bag, which may also be of double-thickness cellophane. In a separate cellophane-wrapped package are the four cigarettes.

For the noon meal, the soldier on emergency rations receives a can of meat and cheese, a box of malted milk or dextrose tablets, two more packages of Army formula biscuits (called K-1 and K-2), and an envelope containing powdered lemon juice fortified with synthetic Vitamin C, to be dissolved with three lumps of sugar in a pint of water. Chewing gum and cigarettes again complete the meal.

The envelope containing the lemon-juice powder may be of cellophane.

In the evening, meat is included again. With

it go two more packages of biscuits, an envelope (which may be of cellophane) of powdered bouillon to be dissolved in hot or cold water, and a two-ounce portion of a highly nourishing chocolate bar containing oat flour, milk powder, and 150 units of Vitamin B-1. This is known as the "D-bar." Gum and cigarettes provide the refreshments at the end of the day.

Throughout the analysis of soldiers' "K" rations, you see, cellophane has appeared as a significant packaging agent in the war. Only after we see Victory will the pretty little wrapper be a part of every civilian's shopping life again.

* * *

"HMM, fresh fruit salad, but why is it so brown?" Every housewife and chef knows that fruits such as apples, bananas, pears and peaches quickly discolor and become unappetizing in appearance when cut and left exposed to air. In terms of pantry labor this has meant that all sliced fresh fruits must be prepared at the last minute—practically while the other food is being served—thereby eliminating quantity serving at parties. And, according to Dr. M. A. Joslyn of the University of California Agricultural Experiment Station, brown discolored fruit is not only unpleasant to look at and frequently flat and flavorless to taste, but it also cheats you of the vitamins you are paying for.

The problem was worked on by scientists at the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research, Inc., at Yonkers, New York, and they discovered a non-toxic chemical, thiocarbamide, which would effectively prevent discoloring of cut plant tissue. It has been made available in tablet form under the name of Frulite.

A tablet of thiocarbamide dissolved in a quart of cold water is adequate to treat a quantity of sliced fruit and if any of the solution is left, it may be used again. The cut fruit is immersed in the solution for not more than thirty seconds, drained and put into the refrigerator. Cut fruit treated in this way will retain its normal color at room temperature for one day; in frozen conditions, it will not discolor even after many months, and sliced apples, treated previous to drying, will retain their full color two to three months at room temperature or a year in cold storage.

* * *

SINCE the outbreak of the war most housewives have been quite alarmed by the fact that it is next to impossible to purchase a bottle of common, everyday ammonia. Moreover, they do not know the reason for the sudden disappearance of this household item. The reason is that ammonia has gone to war That is, there are hundreds of places in the production of bombs, explosives, torpedoes, bullets, and shells where the need for ammonia is indispensable. For example, the combination of ammonia and oxygen gives nitric acid. And all explosives demand the use of nitric acid in their production. Moreover, ammonia is essential in the refining of crude oil. Many of the harmful acids in crude oil are neutralized so that the oil may be used by the military machines. But these examples are only indicative of the vast role that ammonia must play if our war effort is to be a success.

Ammonia is used in the manufacture of an untold number of pertinent civilian products. But in order that it may fill the position demanded of it by the modern scientific war, its use in civilian products has been drastically curtailed.

Although ammonia commands a somewhat significant position in our present economy, it consists of comparatively common place elements: it is merely one part nitrogen combined with three parts of hydrogen. Furthermore, nitrogen is four-fifths of the air we breathe and hydrogen is a part of the water we drink every day. However, these elements must be combined chemically in order to produce ammonia.

* * *

SPIDERS have a love-life too. In fact the methods by which a spider goes about winning his spouse resembles that of some of our most law-abiding male citizens.

Instead of an engagement ring, a male spider will capture a fly, wrap it up in silken threads, and bring it to the female spider whom he is courting. If she accepts the fly they are considered engaged.

Sometimes a spider must use more drastic means if his choice does not seem to care for him. He will spin a beautiful web near the female spider. He then diverts her attention by dancing. She usually also begins to dance going perilously near his spider web. If he succeeds in pushing her into the web she is his.

Certain male spiders are very shy and therefore approach the female in a very timid manner; others who are rather cocky will come and strut before their chosen females displaying their Atlas-like physiques.

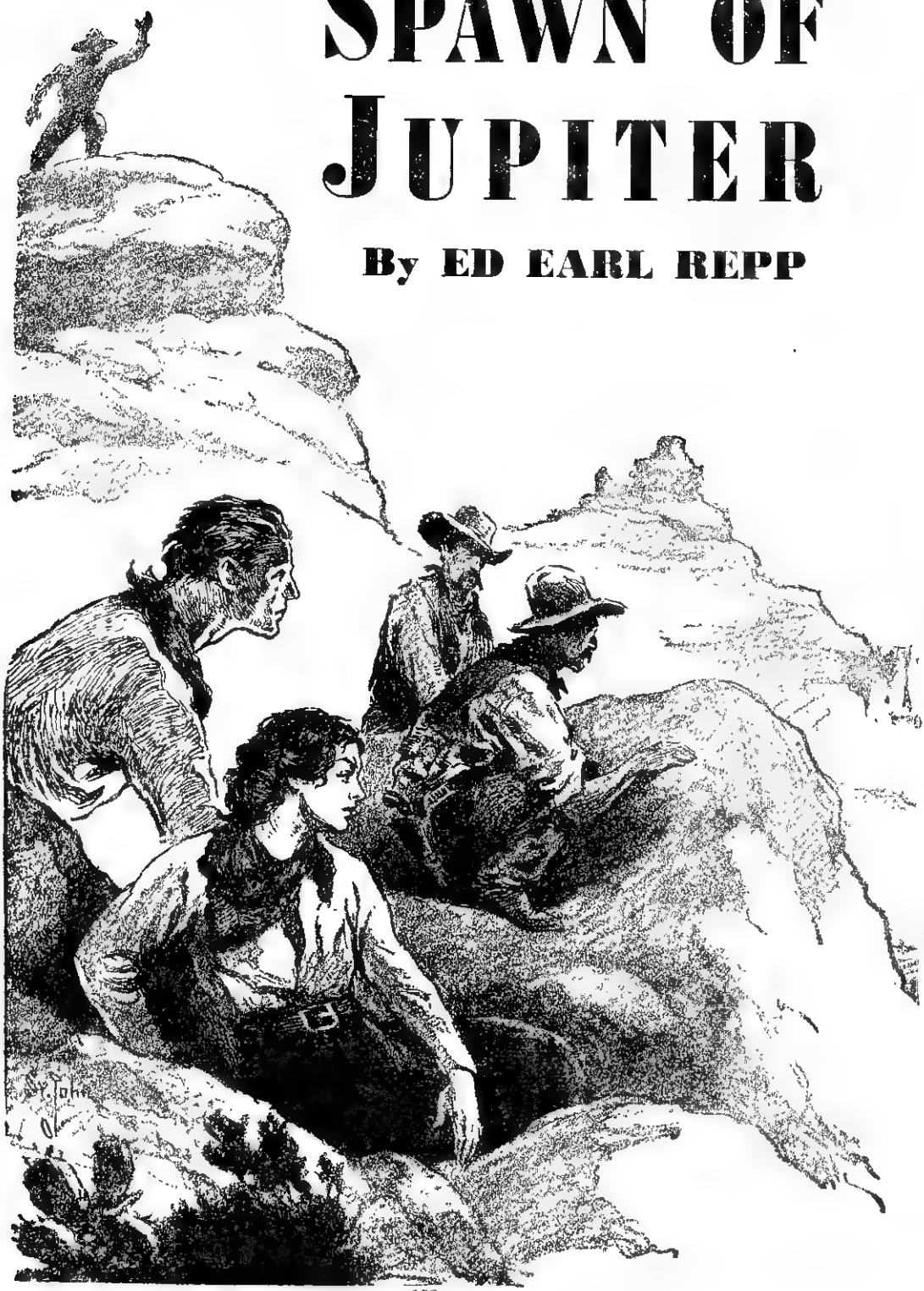
Those spiders who are more on the playful side or who are musically inclined may pull on the strings of a spider web as though playing a harp. If the female signals back to the male by pulling on the harp strings she signifies her willingness to mate with that particular male.

In other cases we find the male spider using something similar to cave-man tactics to capture his bride. While she is spinning a thread in escaping him he will seize the thread which she is spinning, wrap it around her and take her home with him.

Woe to the suitor who fails to capture the spider of his choice. Since female spiders are larger than the males he must escape immediately if she refuses him or rather refuses to follow his playful tactics. Some females, if they dislike their suitors, will rush out, capture the male spider, pull him into the nest and devour him. Others, such as the black widow, may even poison an unlucky suitor.

SPAWN OF JUPITER

By ED EARL REPP

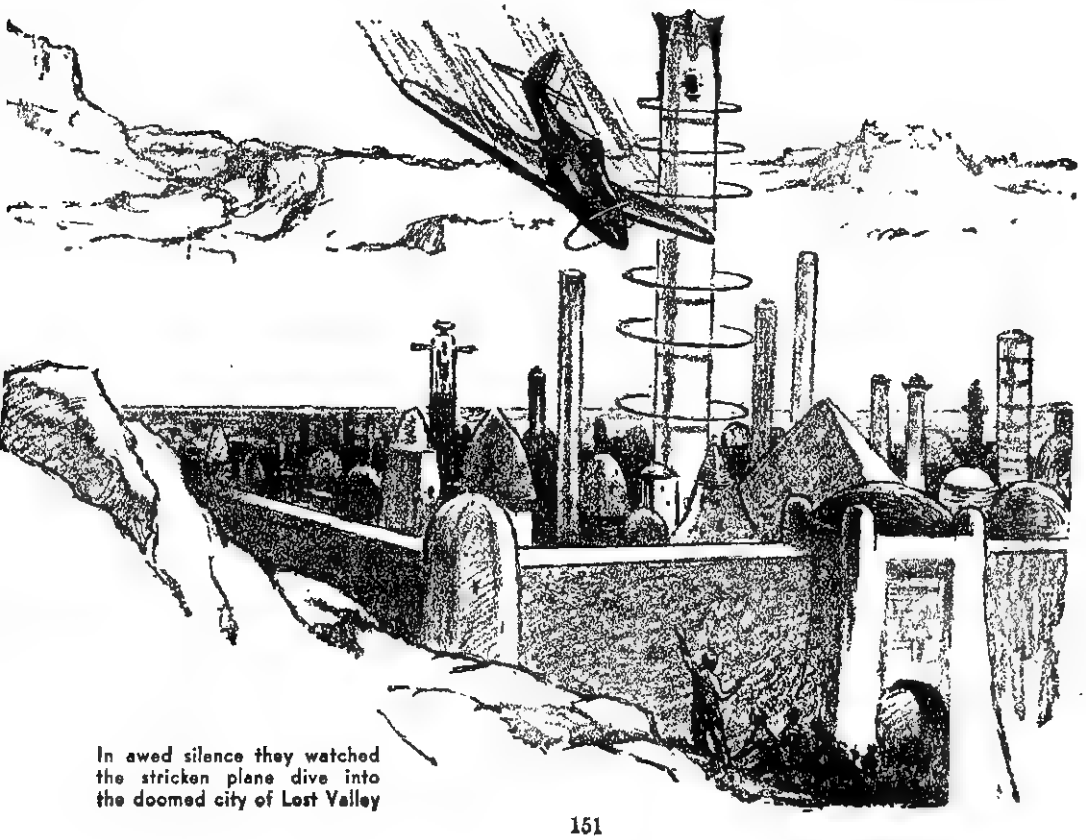


There was a strange city below the surface of this waterless lake—a city as deadly to enter as it was to leave!

HEAT waves danced like transparent dervishes over the blistering floor of Death Valley, bringing a steady stream of perspiration to Dave Weston's blocky face. The young Caltech astro-physicist stood on a rocky promontory of Telescope Peak and swept the burning badlands through powerful binoculars, his lean frame rigid with hope and expectancy.

Dust lay thick on his field boots and clothing, evidence of the laborious climb up the steep slants of the Peak. His leonine head swung slowly as he played the glasses over the weird, deadly beauty of the Valley below him. Worry and anxiety were etched plainly at the sides of his fine mouth. Mysterious, silent, the Valley only mocked back at him, its secrets locked behind the hot, blue haze. For the thousandth time he told himself that his father would never be found alive here. But despite this conviction, each new day saw him high in the burning hills searching for the slightest indication to disprove his belief.

Now the discordant notes of a wheezy harmonica came to him as he probed the badlands with his glasses. It was



In awed silence they watched the stricken plane dive into the doomed city of Lost Valley

an oddly carefree sound in the brooding quiet of the desert. But he drew some comfort from it and glanced at one of his guides, Mac Barwell, who lay in the scant shade of a sage bush, shoulders against red lava bomb as he beat a patched boot in time with his impromptu recital. Beside him, Bill Harrigan, big enough to make two of the withered Mac, and as sad-faced as only a desert rat can be, drew noisily on his corncob pipe, his faded eyes looking off distantly.

But the young scientist was not conscious of either of them. His sun-darkened face creased into bitter lines. Somewhere down there, amid the wild, treacherous beauty of this God-forsaken wilderness of salt flats, craggy peaks, and poisoned waterholes, wandered Charles Weston.

The postmaster at Copper Springs had told Dave that two weeks ago his father, lately retired from California Institute of Technology, where Dave now occupied his chair, had come in with his pack animals and mailed the letter that brought him out here. In the pocket of the lanky scientist's khaki shirt, the letter seemed to grow heavy with the importance attached to it.

Brief and cryptic, it was typical of Charles Weston:

My dear Dave:

This will be the last time I shall communicate with you by letter. I am returning to camp today to remain indefinitely.

Now for the news. I am certain at last that I have found the trail of the meteorite! Unless the Palomar telescope and spectrographs are very much wrong, millions of dollars in precious metals are within my reach! That means I will need you immediately.

Come at once to Copper Springs, bringing the portable shortwave set with you. Listen for my signals at nine P. M., March 21, when I shall give you full instructions for reaching me. I'm counting on you, Dave!

Your father.

Dave's face grew darker. March twenty-first was a week ago. That night and every night since, he had listened. Yet out of the mystery of the desert had come no signal.

Grimly, he lowered the glasses, a deep sigh expanding his chest. Thoughts came crowding through his mind, barbed reminders of the past.

It had been four years ago that the two hundred-inch telescope at Mount Palomar detected a tiny projectile flying off the surface of Jupiter. That the meteor's orbit was carrying it toward earth kindled astronomical interest to white heat.

When it struck in Death Valley two years ago, scientists and adventurers came from all over the world to search for it. Spectrographs of the falling meteorite's trail indicated that quantities of gold, platinum, silver, and other precious metals were abundant in it. But the fierce heat of the valley was like a blow-torch on the luxury-softened searchers. Nearly fifty men found unmarked graves in the first year of the search.

Even airplanes failed to find the barest trace of a meteor crater. Gradually the search tapered off to less than a score of wanderers. Charles Weston was one of them.

The thought burned like acid in Dave's mind that his father had joined the other courageous but foolhardy men who had fallen out there. Yet he knew the hoplessness of scouring the wasted valley of death for his father. He could only search for him as he was searching today, holding pack animals, provisions, and his guides in constant

readiness, should he pick up a clue by radio or binoculars.

DAVE swung back to the trail as Bill Harrigan growled dolefully, "Seven days now we've come up here, Dave. Seven days you've paid me an' Mac to hold our burros ready. Reckon it would be dishonest of me not to speak what's in my mind."

Dave hooked his thumbs over his belt, squinting almost belligerently at the grizzled old giant. "Well?" he snapped.

Harrigan shoved his hat down on his face and scratched the back of his head. "It's like this," he grunted. "I've seen dozens of men pack out into the Funerals or the Panamints like your dad did. Some of 'em have come back, some ain't. But I'll tell you this. Waitin' and searchin's no good. If a man's gonna come out, he'll come. If he ain't, nobody but the buzzards will know where to look."

Mac Barwell sprang to his feet. Watery blue eyes flashed in the leathery skin of his face. "Why, you cantankerous, pessimistic oaf!" he scourged. "'Course Weston's coming out. Just because he's a mite late, you git as long-faced as a sagehen at a mass meetin' of coyotes." The old prospector glanced apologetically at Weston. "Bill allus was one to see the darkest side," he excused.

Harrigan wagged his great head mournfully. "It's a sort of phee-losophy of mine," he protested, "that if you follow anything far enough, you'll find it turns out for the worst. Hard-headed common sense, is all."

"Common sense or not," Dave ground out, "I'll keep tramping up here, and listening over that radio, until I've got proof my father is dead. You're getting paid by the day. If you want to back out, do it now."

Bill Harrigan stood up straight, a hurt look coming over his features. "The money don't enter into it." He shook his head. "I jest hate to see a man livin' on false hope."

Dave slung the canteen over his shoulder. He faced the pair of them squarely. "I don't think it is false hope," he said quietly. "My father has a sort of philosophy too. He thinks that a man with intelligence and courage can lick almost anything . . . including the desert. Wherever he is, I'm willing to bet he's got water and food. The heat at this time of the year wouldn't be bad enough to get him, either. Save your sympathy for somebody that needs it, Bill. I don't think Charles Weston does."

AT THE foot of the peak, they got into Dave's dusty roadster again and headed back for Copper Springs. About five miles out of town they slowed down as a car, parked beside the road, caught their attention. It was empty, and the driver was nowhere in sight.

Then Dave was grinding the car to a stop. Just off the road, a hundred feet ahead, lay the form of a girl!

Dave was the first to reach her. Face down, she lay in a pathetic little huddle against the coarse ground. As he picked her up, something that shone like polished bronze fell from her hand. Almost instantly, then, she awoke.

The scientist had a disturbing, heart-stopping moment of staring into frightened blue eyes. He was conscious of the lightness of her slender body, of the cameo-like perfection of her tanned features. Her lips, parted slightly, revealed glistening white teeth.

"Did you hear it?" she whispered suddenly.

Dave began to wonder if what he'd said about heat prostration was quite

correct. "We didn't hear a thing," he said seriously. "We were driving by, and—here we are."

The girl seemed to be in a trance of some sort. She closed her eyes again, and, shaking her head, murmured, "It was beautiful! Music — I've never heard anything like it. It was like the sound of thousands of violins, rising and falling. I heard chimes, and voices, way off . . . they seemed to come from the north."

Bill Harrigan shot a glance at Mac. He shook his head. "And her so young," he whispered gruffly.

Abruptly, the girl caught a breath. A blush stained her cheeks as she wriggled out of Dave's arms. "Oh! I'm sorry!" she gasped. "I guess I was still half-way paralyzed by it. But it was so——"

"—sudden," Dave nodded. "I know. The heat hits you so fast you don't know about it until days later. What amazes me is that you came to so quickly."

"But it wasn't the heat!" The blonde hair tossed, emphatically. "I've been out here every day for weeks. I was looking for bits of glass. I remember reaching for a piece of brown obsidian, I guess it was."

This time it was Mac Barwell who pursed his lips and glanced at Bill. "Bits of glass," he repeated sourly. "I've found 'em heapin' up rocks, weighin' 'em like they was gold. Lady, you just take it quiet-like and we'll—"

Impatience brushed a frown across the girl's forehead. "I'm all right," she argued. "It wasn't a sunstroke, and I'm perfectly sane. My name is Helen Lodge. My hobby is collecting specimens of that curious blue grass you find out here in the desert."

She began to seem a little more reasonable to Dave, then. He himself had often admired the delicate shades of blue and rose and amethyst the action of the sun and sand produced in ordinary glass. Old bottles, cut glass vases, tumblers, a hundred things dropped by travelers many years ago, were converted by nature's magic into items collectors paid high prices for. No stained glass artist had ever produced the softness of tone the desert did; nor had the cause of the transformation been discovered yet.

"When I touched that glass," the girl was saying, "it all started. The music seemed to engulf me, and I ceased to exist. I felt like a leaf drifting around out in space . . . helpless."

With a sudden thought, Dave glanced down, remembering the shining thing that had dropped from the girl's hand when he picked her up. His eyes kindled with eagerness as he saw it lying there. It was an irregular mass of translucent, golden-brown material. It appeared harmless enough, but . . .

As he reached for it, Helen Lodge cried out a warning. *"That's it!"* she cried. "That's the rock I touched!"

But Dave was already standing up with it poised in his palm. And he felt no strange qualms, heard no strange music. There was suspicion in the flat gaze that bored into the girl's face.

"You don't hear it——?" she asked. "You don't feel any different?"

"I feel," Dave Weston said, "as if I'd just picked up a rather strange-looking rock. That's all."

Gingerly Helen Lodge reached for it. She gripped it in her right hand.

And suddenly the two prospectors and Dave were staring in amazement as she quietly slipped to the ground, to lie there unconscious!

CHAPTER II

Out of the Silence

ONCE more she regained her senses the instant the strange rock was

taken from her palm. A feeling of eeriness gripped Dave. Mac and Bill stared like statues. "It's bad!" Harrigan muttered. "Plumb bad! And you kin bet your pick an' burro on that!"

Dave helped her up, feeling foolish and guilty. "We'll take you back in our car, Miss Lodge," he suggested.

"You'll do nothing of the sort! I tell you I'm perfectly all right. I'm quite capable of driving home alone and I intend to do it right now. I've got a lot of thinking to do about this, tonight." A quick smile dissolved the sternness from her lips. "Why, who knows—maybe I'm a new Messiah, or something!"

Dave could not repress a smile. "Anyway, I'll take this rock along and give it a once-over," he told her.

"You'll put it in my pocket for me," she corrected promptly. "Maybe I can't touch it, but I'll work on it somehow. Besides, Dr. Kaley can probably help me."

"Kaley!" The savageness with which the name ripped from Weston's lips drew every glance.

The girl nodded. "I'm Dr. Brand Kaley's secretary. You know him?"

"Yes. I'm Dave Weston." Dave's jaw thrust out, a smoky sheen clouding his brown eyes.

Then the two bewildered prospectors were watching the look of anger intensify on her face, and they were listening with raised eyebrows to her crackling reply.

"I've heard of you, too, Dr. Weston. If I'm not mistaken, you and your father tried to cheat Dr. Kaley out of a fortune not long ago." She thrust her small fists into the pockets of her jacket. "Thank you for your help," she snapped.

Before Dave could reply, she had spun about and walked to her car. It roared past them while the trio still stood in awkward surprise.

Dave stared after the retreating cloud of dust. His fists knotted so hard that the knuckles showed white through the brown skin. "So we cheated Kaley, did we?" he muttered. "Why, the dirty swine——!"

Bill Harrigan's head rocked sorrowfully. "From the minute I laid eyes on her," he brooded, "I knowed there was trouble comin'. Mark my words, son——"

Mac fingered his long chin. "If it's none of my business, say so," he put narrowly. "But jest what was she drivin' at?"

Wordlessly, Weston started back to the car. But as the others fell in beside him, he started talking in an explanatory voice.

"I guess you wouldn't know what a photographic filter is," he began. "It's a piece of colored glass that makes it possible to take pictures through fog and other types of haze. One thing they've never been able to photograph through is the mist surrounding a few of the planets. Consequently, some of the planets, like Venus, are virtually unknown to us.

"Five years ago my father and Brand Kaley began collaborating on a filter that would cut even heavy cloud layers like that. Two years ago they succeeded. Before Dad knew what was happening, Kaley had patented the invention and put it on the market commercially. He's made a fortune since then. Every camera hound in the country has one. Kaley's worth about five hundred thousand now. And Dad—well, he's still got his teacher's pension!"

He got in the car and raced the engine into life. And because Mac and Bill were old and wise in the way of men, neither said a word during the ride home.

DAVE had set up temporary headquarters in a small adobe house just outside the tiny, three-hundred-population city. At nine o'clock, as he had done every night for a week, he planted himself before the little short-wave set. He switched it on and settled the headphones against his ears.

But this night his thoughts strayed. He kept thinking of Helen Lodge. Just why it meant so much to him that she thought him a would-be swindler, he could not say.

When he let his mind rest on Brand Kaley—bluff, red-faced, military in bearing—his ideas became more definite. Dave's shoulder muscles bunched at the fascinating thought of finding Kaley alone out on the desert some day. Just the two of them—— A lot of old grievances would lose their razor edge when Dave walked back from the reckoning.

It was not particularly surprising to him that Kaley was out here. A scientist and a fortune-hunter himself, Death Valley's secret must have attracted him irresistibly. A cold sensation stole through his stomach when he asked himself if he could have followed Charles Weston back into the desert that last day——!

Then all at once, his thoughts exploded in wild confusion, as a faint whisper came through the 'phones!

Instantly Dave was crouching over the receiver. His hand trembled on the controls as he tuned the signal in full force. His lips were dry, his breath rasping. After an eternity it came again —a little island of coherence amid a sea of static—a distant voice, that whispered:

"Dave! Dave, I'm calling you. Do you hear me? It's . . ."

The voice faded back into nothingness. A sob of desperation choked the scientist. With the palms of his hands he forced the earphones tight against his head. "Louder, Dad!" he whispered. "I can't make it out."

As if in answer, his father's voice swelled back, the words so distorted that Weston could catch only infrequent phrases.

"—week I've tried . . . reach you," Dave made it out. "This will be . . . final attempt. Terrible danger . . . send more. If you hear . . . listen closely."

Dave's whole body was racked with tension. Then he was straining to hear as the voice from the unknown filtered weakly through the wires.

"I have found meteorite. At least, what we believed a meteorite. It lies in a valley you . . . never find. There is wealth untold . . . for taking. But taking means death!

"Do not come here, Dave! This is valley of death. Those who enter must stay. The very air . . . deadly."

Dave's reflexes leaped like jerked cords as a loud, singing "spanggg" broke through his father words. Fear bathed his limbs icily.

The voice resumed more distinctly, but this time there was stark terror edging the tones. "They have seen me! I must go back now, for the last time. I hope you have heard, though my batteries are all but dead. David, my last wish is that you shall never try to follow me. Because I mean this so sincerely, I will not tell you where Lost Valley is to be found.

"Before I go, I will try to explain briefly what has happened. Those who live here——"

Crash!

A terrific explosion thundered against Dave's ear-drums. Then the sound was superseded by a vast, empty silence. The young physicist dived at the receiver. But Charles Weston's message was concluded. Throughout the five minutes Dave sweated over the

controls, not another word boiled through. He rocked back in his chair at last, stunned.

His eyes wandered to the moonlight flooded scene beyond the window. Out there in the waterless deadly world of sand and red rock was his father. Not a hope this time, but a certainty.

Again and again the things Weston had said drummed through his brain: "—a valley of death—wealth untold—the very air is deadly!"

What fantastic thing had happened to him out there? Had he lost his mind?

Then he remembered the first explosion. That, at least, had been no one's imagination. At the recollection of the second, apprehension claimed him.

After a while he got up and began casting glances about the room, as if he hoped to find there the secret of Lost Valley. His eyes fastened on a little collection of minerals he had picked up in the desert. All at once he stood stock still.

His mind had flashed back to Helen Lodge, to the rock she had found, to the music she claimed to hear . . . *Could that have anything to do with the mystery of the hidden valley?*

Abruptly, Dave had sprung to the door and torn it open. He went through the house at a gallop, nearly scaring Mac and Bill out of their seats in the front room.

"Pack the burros and be ready in an hour!" he flung at them. "We're leaving at last!"

CHAPTER III

Lost Valley

BRAND KALEY'S place lay at the foot of a jagged little peak, a quarter of a mile out of town. The gaunt, brittle branches of a *palo fierro* screen patterned the warm rectangles of light along the front and side of the house. A familiar form appeared before one of the windows as Weston swung up the path. His impatient pounding brought hurried steps to the door.

The light behind Helen Lodge threw her face into shadow, but her golden hair glowed softly about her head. There was open dislike in her face as she said coldly, "I thought I made it clear, Mr. Weston, that I am keeping that rock . . . "

Dave gestured impatiently: "Keep it —that isn't why I came. Not exactly, anyway. I need your help, Miss Lodge!"

He kept right on talking as she started to shake her head. "My father is in danger somewhere out in the valley. I heard him over short wave not fifteen minutes ago. God knows where he is, but wherever that voice came from, there is death all about. I think you can help me find him . . . !"

"I?" The girl's slim shoulders lifted slightly in an aloof shrug; but Dave read a quickening of interest in her features, a trace of sympathy.

"Maybe I'm off on a tangent," the young scientist jerked, "but I've got a hunch that rock you found—" His voice broke like a snapped twig at the sound of heavy footfalls from the interior.

Then a hardness settled in this face, matching the stiffening of his body. "Kaley!" he bit out. Under the frowning black bar his brows made, his eyes whipped over the other's blocky figure.

Brand Kaley thrust a stubby arm before the girl, forcing her rudely back from the door. He planted his balled fists against his hips and canted a bullet head forward on wide, thick shoulders. Oblique eyes, alive with malevolence, slotted dangerously at either side of his flattened nose.

Kaley, the scientist, looked more like

a veteran of the prize-ring; but those who had come in contact with him knew the cruel, hair-trigger genius of his mind.

"You've got crust, coming here, Weston," he broke out angrily. "What do you want?"

"Nothing that concerns you," Dave snapped. "I was talking to your secretary before——"

"Before I butted in?" Kaley cut in, grinning. "Consider your little talk at an end. While Miss Lodge is in my employ, she will have very little to say to you, I believe."

"That's where you're wrong." Dave's gaze slid past the beefy features to the girl's apprehensive countenance. He took a single step into the room, when Kaley planted his palm against his chest.

"Get out!" he barked.

Dave clubbed his arm down with a chopping blow. "I'll get out when I've talked to her!" he responded angrily. "You got away with swindling my father, but you won't be the cause of his death if I can help it."

"His death!" Kaley echoed harshly. "Weston, you're letting your imagination run wild. As for my 'swindling' him, I refer you to Kaley *versus* Weston—the court decided that question."

It was Helen who spoke next. "Perhaps he's right, Doctor," she ventured. "The thing I found might be of some use. If it is——"

"Keep out of this," rapped Haley. "I told you to get out, Weston. I won't waste my breath again."

DAVE stood quietly watching him, a tall, alert figure in his dusty breeches and khaki shirt open down to the third button. "For a broken-down chemist like you were when Dad took you in, you've grown to something mighty dictatorial," he breathed. "You'd still be working in a lab for forty a week, if he hadn't recognized your brilliance and taken you on. You didn't have enough get-up to succeed on your own. But under his direction you helped him perfect his invention—and then stole it from him! If wolves ever masquerade as men, Kaley, I'm looking at one now!"

Kaley struck then, the force of his fist hurling Dave against the door jamb. A slow trickle of blood wormed out of the corner of the younger man's mouth. With a muttered oath he drove himself forward.

They met with the shock of two angry grizzlies colliding at full tilt. An elation that was like strong wine flamed up within Dave. Every savage blow he sank into Kaley's body and face made his blood pound faster.

The chemist was hard, his bulky body well muscled with heay sinews. For the first half minute they slugged and grunted and swore, each taking as much punishment as he gave. Dave's face felt hot and swollen on the right side from a roundhouse blow.

Kaley's punches began to lose their sting. As if to bolster his own confidence, he tucked his bullet head down and waded in with both arms pumping. Dave sensed the change in his tactics and contented himself with blocking his fists as fast as they flew. Then Kaley's arms came down and he waited, panting heavily.

Immediately Dave jabbed a left in his face that straightened him up. He followed with a right that came from the floor, smashing heavily into his jaw. Kaley started falling backwards. Dave got a hand behind his head and held him there a moment. The chemist floundered sideways, swinging automatically at the bloody, grinning face before him.

For the last time Dave hit, his bare

knuckles slashing down across Kaley's face and bringing a torrent of blood from his nose. A dazed, stricken look came into his eyes.

Then he seemed to fold up, like a split-open sack of meal.

DAVE'S first reaction, as he glanced up from Kaley's lax form, was to apologize. But the girl acted as though she hadn't heard him.

"He never told those things to me," she said wonderingly. "He said it was your father who—who only helped on the invention . . . instead of himself. Is it true that Kaley returned Charles Weston's good will the way you said?"

Somberly, Dave nodded. Then, abruptly, he remembered what had brought him here. "The rock—you've got it here?"

Helen indicated a battered old desk in one corner. "He was studying it when you came."

Dave walked over and picked up the strange lump of amber-gold mineral. He handled it delicately, conscious that it might mean the difference between life and death for his father. When his eyes sought Helen's again, his face was grave.

"I'm going to tell you the reason I came tonight," he began soberly. "It's only fair you should know everything—because I'm going to ask you to do something I have no right to ask."

Briefly, then, he told of his father's search for the lost meteorite, of his failing to report, and of the conversation of a half hour ago. Helen's eyes were doubting at first, but finally believing.

"But what can I do?" she wanted to know.

"You thought you could tell what direction that music came from before," Dave said tensely. "If that's true, and if, as I think, this piece of mineral has some strong connection with the meteorite, you should be able to lead us to Lost Valley!"

It was not doubt and mistrust that came into the girl's face. It was eagerness — eagerness that Dave stopped with a raised hand.

"What I'm asking you is, to take the risk of dying of thirst if we get lost, perhaps of being followed by gold-hungry adventurers—Kaley not excepted. It's a thing any man could steer clear of and not be called a coward. Knowing that, do you still want to help me?"

Helen said quietly, "It means all those risks—but doesn't it also mean a chance for your father to come back alive?" Her face glowed with a quiet, sincere emotion that made Dave's pulses hammer.

Impulsively, Dave seized her hand—to gasp with surprise as she cried out and slipped to the floor!

Dave cursed himself as he pocketed the amber rock and helped her up. "Stupid ass that I am!" he scourged himself. "I forgot I was holding that stuff. It seems to work like electricity—and my taking your hand closed the circuit!"

"It did this good at least," Helen smiled weakly. "I heard the music from about the same direction as before—over towards the Last Chance Mountains."

"Good!" Dave nodded. "I've got burros, guides and food ready. With you to put us on the track once a day, we can't go wrong!"

BEFORE the brassy sun had rolled to its zenith the next day, the little cavalcade of four was winding through the broken, tortuous pass in the Panamints. At either side, gaunt, reddish cliffs climbed above them in crumbling steps.

The day was hot already, with a

parching heat that made them glad for the flopping water-bags and canteens festooning the sides of one of the pack animals. By turns they rode and walked, resting the small burros as much as possible.

Harrigan stalked along in the lead, shaking his head glumly. Mac gave the party a circus-parade aspect, as he dragged discordant music from his rusty harmonica. Optimistic as ever, he swayed easily to the lurchings of his saddle beast, playing one tune after the other.

At noon they stopped at a small, anemic waterhole and ate a hurried lunch. Then they were pressing on again. In the distance the purple ranks of the Last Chance Mountains shimmered through heat waves that gave them an unreal appearance.

Some time in the middle of the afternoon Dave heard a faint, alien sound. Hurriedly he turned back and shot a look into the sky. Far behind them, a tiny black speck was lined against the blue cup of the heavens. A buzzard, perhaps, or——

"By heck!" Mac explained. "An airyplane. Ain't no mail route goes over thisaway."

Helen gasped. "Doctor Kaley has his plane out here. Do you suppose he's——?"

"I'd take a bet on it," Dave ground out. "He'd stop at nothing for a little gold to line his pockets."

Helplessly, they waited out there while the speck expanded into a tiny black cross, and then became a roaring, dipping monoplane. All of them were kept busy trying to pacify the terrified burros as Kaley dived at them and then sent the craft into a steep climb. Unexpectedly, then, he went curving back toward Copper Springs.

"So that's his game," Dave muttered. "He'll keep track of us that way until we seem to be reaching somewhere. Then——"

Abruptly he went to digging the lump of amber-colored material from his pocket. "Helen, we've got to reach there while he's back on one of his waiting periods. He'll be shooting out here every four or five hours, I'll bet. Let's check on our direction and push on."

She nodded gamely, though as Dave slipped his arm about her waist to support her, he could feel her body trembling slightly. A feeling of guilt assailed him, at the part he was forced to play.

But as her eyes fluttered open after touching the rock, she became excited. "It's louder now!" she exclaimed. "And it's straight toward the nearest peak of the mountains."

Bill threw his long leg across his burro. "I fear me," he growled. "We're plumb makin' our beds with cactus for blankets an' rocks for pillows if we go further."

"But we're going, nevertheless," Weston snapped. "The fact that the sounds are louder indicates that we're getting closer. There'll be mighty little stopping until we reach Lost Valley."

Mac slapped the big old revolver that hung at the hip of his baggy trousers. "I got pizen for wolves like Kaley," he said darkly. "If he comes close enough ag'in, I'll put so many holes in him he'll look like a flying collender!"

The sun dropped lower, sinking all too soon behind the bony upthrusts of the Inyo Range. They were in the real badlands now. The next waterhole was fifteen miles away. Everywhere, the flat bed of the ancient sea they were crossing was pitted with great potholes. And everywhere their view was impeded by the small, flat-topped islands that jutted their eroded shapes from the floor like small mesas.

Night came, bringing a blessed cool-

ness and a heavy darkness soon to be broken by the full moon. They made camp, to rest themselves and the burros for a few hours before shoving on.

Through that weary night they plodded on, skirting holes and erosion-islands in their fight to bring help to Dave's father. Dave himself was stolidly silent, plagued by merciless fears. Mac Barwell still tortured their ears with music and Bill continued to prophesy the worst. But Dave knew by now he could not have found a more loyal pair in all of Death Valley.

SHORTLY after dawn the ominous thunder of Brand Kaley's plane again struck their ears. Dave rushed the burros ahead, hoping to reach the shelter of the first slope of the Last Chances. In one of the many gullies slashing the foot of the mountain, they could prevent his frightening the animals as he had done before. Diving upon them would be too dangerous there.

Leading his burro, he ran past the last of the weird little islands. Then he was stopping in amazement, his eyes going wide.

Before them stretched what looked like a small lake. Yet it had none of the deep blue of water—simply a soft, rippling sheen that hovered over the desert's face. Dave's first thought was that it was a mirage. But as they recovered from their shock and hurried ahead, the sight came closer.

Weston was first to reach the shore of it. He saw now that it filled a low spot in the valley's floor—how deep he could not tell, because, despite its soft appearance, it was utterly opaque. Gingerly, he placed a foot in the "water."

Helen gasped, and Mac and Bill stared. Dave's foot had disappeared, as though cut off at the ankle!

Cautiously, inch by inch, he waded out into that uncanny, five-mile-wide lake. To the others, watching tensely, it was like seeing a man sink deeper and deeper into the sand. Up to his hips, now, Dave looked like a man cut off at the middle.

And still the scientist heard the grating of his boots in gravel. Suddenly he was possessed of an eagerness to know what lay ahead. He started walking swiftly forward into the lake.

The rippling surface crept past his belt, past his armpits, lapped his chin. For one fleeting instant he peered along a silver plane that tilted slightly above him. The plane became a thread stretched before him. One more step he took—and plunged himself into another world. . . .

CHAPTER IV

The Rebel City

THE desert's floor was there again, rough and dry, sloping sharply down from him to form a bowl-shaped valley broken by countless peaks and hummocks. Above his head was a rippling canopy that had been a lake's surface before. A harsh green light illuminated the setting.

But Dave's eyes were for the glittering towers and buildings in the center of the valley. Spire after spire of shining metal thrust itself from the graceful mass, pyramidal in shape, that formed the bulk of the city. The strange city was small—perhaps not more than a half-mile square—yet it hinted at wonders Dave could scarcely envision.

Surrounding the cluster of buildings was a high wall that seemed to shut out the prosaic things of the desert. Caught in the wonder of it, Dave started forward.

Then a cry behind him drew him

back. Helen stood there with the top of her head apparently cut off—still above the plane. Mac and Bill were two pairs of running feet that lengthened into legs and finally became men.

All of them stood and gazed for a full minute. It was Dave who spoke first. "Lost Valley! You've led us to it, Helen. Let's—let's go down!"

The spires gained height as they drew closer to the wall. One in particular rose above the rest. From top to bottom its needle-like tower was encircled by a series of rings that appeared to be floating in their places. It occupied the central spot in the city.

Something close to fear clutched all four of them as a gate appeared in the wall and strange beings poured out. They waited while a horde of tall, copper-faced men hurried towards them. Then a new element stopped even the running men.

A great roar came into the valley, the deafening echoes tumbling down from the flat sky. Without warning something rocketed through the dividing plane—Kaley's ship!

Too late he saw what he had done. He tried to pull the monoplane up in a vertical climb. The engine whined, the struts screamed. But Kaley's landing gear was struck by one of the erosion-peaks that spun it around like a toy. The ship flipped over on its nose and sank slowly back.

The gangling, awkward other-worldlings veered their course to the wrecked plane. Dave and his party stood watching them.

It was then, for the first time, that Weston realized someone had been calling his name.

"Dave!" the call came again. "For the love of heaven, come here!"

He spun about. In the next moment he was running toward the white-haired figure standing atop a high mesa a hundred yards away. The others had heard the urgent summons too. Dave paused to grip Helen's hand as she hurried up; then all four were racing toward the beckoning figure.

Charles Weston called again: "Hurry, Dave! They'll kill you if they get the chance."

A spell of mystery gripped Dave. They reached the foot of the hill and scrambled desperately toward the top, scarcely knowing what the hurry meant. It was when they had nearly reached the top that the first hissing "spangggs" began to burst about them. Patches of ground leaped and smouldered, to reveal rough holes as the black smoke drifted away.

Then they were sprinting after the elderly scientist. Suddenly the ground seemed to swallow him. Hurrying up, Dave and Helen saw a cylindrical hole in the ground. The four of them plunged through almost without pause.

Still the chase went on. Weston yanked down a lever in the wall of the tunnel and then hurried ahead. Dim lights in the ceiling gave what illumination existed.

For fifteen minutes the nightmare of running down straight, rock-walled tunnels, of breaking sharply to left or right when branches presented themselves, went on. When all were nearly exhausted, Charles Weston staggered into a meanly lighted little cavern and stopped.

The meeting between him and his son was simple, almost wordless; yet every man in the cave knew what they were feeling.

"You shouldn't have come, Dave," the white-haired physicist reproved at last. "Not a man of us can ever leave Lost Valley alive. Even if we escaped Garth and his devils, death would wait for us beyond the dividing plane."

"You didn't think I'd go back with

this job unfinished, did you?" Dave grinned happily. "We'll find a way out. . . . But first——"

"First," Weston said grimly, "you must meet our fellow prisoners. Marnok—my son!"

THERE was a movement at the far end of the cavern. Dave saw now what he had not noticed before—that the walls were lined with strange beings who stood in silence.

A tall, slender man—Dave thought of him as a man immediately, though he was certainly not an Earthman—stepped from the throng. He wore a loose-fitting uniform of green material that looked like metal, yet stirred as freely as silk.

His body was more than six feet tall, slender to emaciation, but graceful looking withal. His face was a deep copper color. The eyes that burned on Dave were red as fire, piercing in their brittle luster. Across his lofty forehead was stretched a thin silver cord, at whose center was affixed a silver plate in the shape of a diamond.

He spoke, the words springing into Dave's mind as if by magic. His lips did not move, but the little disk quivered slightly.

"Ever the young must learn by bitter experience," he said softly. "Yet it is not in my heart to reprimand such loyalty. We who must die can yet admire those who possess the qualities we have strived for."

Dave heard Bill's muttered words, and almost found it in himself to smile. "Cheerful soundin' cuss! Never heard such pessimism in all my born days!"

While Marnok spoke, all the strange people had been closing in on the little group. Quick suspicion leaped into Dave's mind. His father sensed it.

"Trust Marnok and his people as you would me," he whispered. "It's those others we've got to look out for."

Marnok smiled, interpreting Weston's words, though he could not have heard them.

"You said we were prisoners," Dave said. "Why is that? And who are you, Marnok?"

"We are those who came in the 'meteorite,'" the strange man said. "You call our former home Jupiter. We came from there seeking escape from slow death—only to find a quicker one."

Helen Lodge gasped. "Jupiter!" her whispered word came. In fright she stared at the curious faces about her.

Again it was Charles Weston who quieted their fears. "Marnok tells the truth," he said. "Jupiter is facing extinction in another thousand years, by an explosion sure to come. For many years the planet has been contracting, until a terrific inner heat has been developed. The surface is so brittle, unlike that of Earth, that such things as volcanoes are unknown. Marnok came seeking salvation for his race."

A babble of disjointed thoughts burst into Dave's mind. Somehow he knew that he was hearing the doleful reflections of the score or so of Jovians circling them.

"Silence!" It was Marnok whose curt order stiffled the bedlam. "Hear our story, and judge then whether your friend who came before you was not right in warning you away from here."

The things he spoke of, in the long, aching moments that followed, kept them all rigid with interest. At first they were unbelieving, then apprehensive, and finally—frightened, with a fear none of them had ever known!

CHAPTER V

Death in the Caves

"WE HAVE long known," the grave-faced ruler began, "that

we must desert our home if the race of Jovians was to survive. While the surface of the planet became increasingly hotter, our supply of water grew smaller and smaller. It was when we were in danger of extinction through lack of water that one of our scientists, dead now for five hundred years, invented Arthonite—the metal which has preserved us this long.

"Arthonite has the property of producing in even the commenest elements the phenomenon you know as 'radiation.' This process, he discovered, simply consists of the atoms of a certain element losing a steady stream of electrons from their mass. As the element lost more and more electrons, it lost weight, changed its characteristics, and became, as you might have guessed, the next lower element in the atomic scale.

"Thus we were able to reduce simple substances such as iron or copper into hydrogen and oxygen! Fusing these two gases, we were provided with an inexhaustible supply of water—while the Arthonite lasted. But the secret died with the inventor. But twenty years ago, only a small amount remained, as the metal itself shrank with use.

"It was then we found how near Jupiter was to a catastrophe. Three amounts of Arthonite were made from the mass that was left. Three ships left to seek new homes. Where the other two landed, I do not know. But two years ago our ship reached your world. We have escaped discovery because of the layer of mixed radiations hanging like a veil over Lost Valley. Solar light, cosmic rays, and the rays of Arthonite radiation produce this phenomenon. No sunlight comes through it, no Arthonite illumination leaves the valley.

"That is why you must never leave. Were you to be exposed to cosmic rays for one moment, your bodies would shrivel!"

Dave gasped. Before he could speak, Marnok was going on.

"In the few minutes you have been in this place, you have absorbed tremendous quantities of radiation as deadly as the rays of radium. But those particles will remain dormant, until acted upon by cosmic radiation. We Jovians planned to protect future generations, against the time when Arthonite ceased to protect us, by having all children born and reared within a huge, lead-protected incubator. When old enough to shift for themselves, they were to be removed to the outer atmosphere. Now our plans have been altered."

"Thanks to Garth!" Charles Weston broke in angrily. "Another case of the strong and stupid defeating the weak but intelligent. Garth was of a race of brutal monstrosities the Jovians tolerated and used as servants. They treated them kindly, teaching them all they knew. Garth is a sort of God to his more stupid racial brothers, because he has the cuuning of a wolf and the bloodthirstiness of an Attila. The day they reached earth, he drove Marnok and his people into the open, keeping the space ship and its precious supply of metal. Since that time, he has built himself an impregnable fortress. The Jovians have lived like animals, hunted day and night by their enemies—the Korlons."

Dave glanced at the faces of the men and women about them. Sadness and defeat were on every countenance. Suddenly he remembered Kaley.

"There's one consolation," he said to his father. "Our friend Kaley is in the hands of the Korlons right now! Providing the crack-up didn't finish him."

Weston smiled half-heartedly. "That's little enough consolation," he said. Then, remembering all they had been through, he added, "One more

question, and then you must rest. How under Heaven did you find Lost Valley?"

A sense of guilt came over Dave. He gripped Helen's hand. "I found it by sacrificing the happiness and probably the life of this girl. I found her unconscious in the desert, one day, gripping a strange mineral. She told me she heard strange, beautiful music when she held it, though it had no effect on me. But she could tell the direction it came from, and by following it, we landed here."

Marnok shrugged. "Probably a small piece of Arthonite that fell out of the exhaust of the ship," he ventured. "Coming in contact with the ring you wear, it commenced working on it. The music was the effect of Arthonite rays on your sensory nerves."

The explanation was logical; yet it did not make Dave feel any better. He groped for words to tell Helen of the remorse that was in him.

Her lips smiled up at him, if her eyes did not. "I think if I had a few hours' sleep I could forgive even a crime like yours," she told him.

Marnok gave an order, unintelligible to the earthlings, that caused the Jovians to fall back. Then he was leading the way through the cavern to a larger one, where crypt-like niches in the walls invited the exhausted quartet with soft, downy blankets.

No invitation was needed to send them all to taking off their boots and rolling in. Dave fell asleep almost as soon as his aching bones sank into the soft bedding. Yet he had time to stare at the black ceiling and curse himself for bringing Helen here, and to wonder if this cave must be his home for the rest of his life. . . .

THE matter of excited voices brought him wide awake some time later. For a long moment he felt too paralyzed with comfort to move. Then he got up and walked through the corridor into the room where Marnok, Weston, and the others crowded about a dozen illuminated plates on the wall.

Weston shot him a worried glance as he approached. He indicated the flickering squares of glass briefly. "Televisors," he said. "One of the few things they salvaged out of the ship. Pickups hidden in the open give us some idea of what's going on. Look at them!"

Each picture gave a small section of the valley; taken as a whole, they gave the whole broad sweep of terrain, including the city. Dave started. At each of a dozen points, groups of burly, armed Korlons were massing behind nests of boulders. Scores of other warriors were pouring out of the metal city.

"Something they've never tried before," Weston growled. "Every tunnel entrance is being covered. Soon they'll be rushing in from every point. The tunnels are thick with traps, but they're ready to sacrifice a few score to get us!"

Dave's eyes flicked about the assembled men. They were paralyzed with terror. Here, utterly helpless, they stood and awaited the end.

"What kind of fighters are you?" he snapped suddenly. "Haven't you made any plans during the months you've been down here?"

Marnok shrugged. "Plans? They are four hundred to our sixty. They have deadly weapons; we have nothing but a dozen worn-out Arthonite guns we use for digging. Once we planned to take them by digging a tunnel directly under the Tower of Light. We did so, and five of our strongest entered secretly. We have never seen them again."

Dave's forehead creased. "These guns —how do they work?" he wanted to know.

"On power sent out from the Tower," Marnok replied. "Our guns receive barely enough force to be able to burn the earth when we use them for digging."

"Then if the Arthonite were cut off, the guns would be useless?"

Marnok smiled bleakly. "Unfortunately, Garth has no intention of doing so."

"But I have!" Dave snapped. His eyes burned into Marnok's face. "From the looks of that battlefield, most of their four hundred are out of the city. With a couple of men I could take the Tower of Light itself!"

A murmur arose from the throng. Then Bill Harrigan's hearty guffaw rose over the sounds. "That's fight talk that does a man good!" he boomed. "Count me in, feller." He stalked from the dormitory, stroking his spade-like chin.

Mac slapped his big revolver. "Likewise me an' Bad News," he said.

Marnok started to protest. Charles Weston stopped him. "New blood never hurt an army yet," he smiled. "This once, let me give the orders, my friend. The four of us will try this foolhardy plan. If it succeeds, you may once more rule the Korlons. If it fails . . . you are no worse off, nor are we."

The Jovian considered. Dave was conscious of the gravity of the moment, of the silence that brooded over the cavern. Then: "As you wish. I am afraid it can mean only death—but a glorious one!"

There were no elaborate preparations to be made. Armed with revolvers alone, they started through the long tunnel, Charles Weston in the lead. Dave paused for just a moment in the sleeping chamber. Helen was still asleep, her face placid in repose.

Before he knew it, he was leaning over her, brushing her smooth forehead with a kiss. Emotion seemed to stifle him. There were so many things he wanted to tell her. Yet in the end he straightened and hurried on, leaving her still unconscious of what was taking place. It lay strongly in Dave's mind that this might be the last time he would ever see her.

THE tunnel ended a quarter of a mile farther on. Above them was a circular steel plate. Dave gestured to Bill Harrigan, the tallest of the group, to try to raise it.

Silence and tension were heavy among them as the trap-door grated and raised. Three gun-barrels followed the widening gap. Bill grunted with the effort of moving the door aside. Abruptly it was done.

Harsh green light flooded the tunnel. Dave hoisted himself through the hole. They had emerged into a great circular room, lofty of ceiling and gleaming with chromium walls. Through the center of the ceiling rose a slender column of bronze. Outside, through long, narrow windows, Dave glimpsed the same amber rings he had seen on first viewing the Tower of Light.

Cautiously he got to his feet. He helped his father and the others up, every nerve crying out against the slightest sound. Charles Weston stared about him with quick, eager glances.

"Follow me!" he whispered. "I know the place by heart, from hearing Marnok describe the original of it on Jupiter."

A circular stairway, constructed in the fashion of those in lighthouses, carried them up through floor after floor. Not a soul did they see. Once Dave paused to peer through a window. Already they were far above the city. In the fields beyond, hundreds of Korlons were pouring into the tunnels! Appre-

hension grew within him. Swiftly he followed Mac, who was bringing up the rear.

They rushed on until the tower was not more than fifteen feet in diameter. Then Charles Weston stopped before a door. "Ready!" he hissed. He pulled down the opening lever—and sprang up the last steps and into the room.

Dave got a single glimpse of a small room choked with apparatus. He saw the termination of the pitted bronze column a few feet above the floor. Weston and the others stopped in the middle of the room, darting hurried looks about and seeing nothing. Dave was on the point of following them when a broad back slid before him from just inside the door.

Someone grated, "One move, Earthmen, and you die!"

Instinctively Dave fell back behind the door. Another voice broke out just as the rattle of revolvers striking the floor reached him. "Weston, you aren't so smart as I'd figured. You picked the wrong side to win, as usual!"

A flame seemed to wash Dave Weston's body. *The speaker was Kaley!* He could hear his father gasp, hear Bill and Mac swearing softly.

"I could die happily, if I could take you with me, Kaley," the elderly scientist breathed. "So you've dealt yourself into this game too, have you?"

"In a small way," Brand Kaley drawled. "In return for teaching Garth the things he needs to know about Earth, when he chooses to leave the valley, I'm to have all the gold I can carry out with me. This little invention of theirs can make gold out of lead, you know!"

"I know that," Weston came back quietly. "I know, too, you'll never leave the valley to spend your wealth! We're all stuck here. We're living radium bombs, every one of us!"

"You're lying!" Kaley rasped. But there was a shade of fear in his tone.

Bill Harrigan laughed loud and long. "Sold out your own world for a mess of gold you can't spend!" he taunted. "Talk about half-cracked desert rats like me an' Mac——!"

"Shut up!" Kaley roared. "We'll see about that later. Garth, how much power can this outfit generate? Enough to increase the range of your guns about four hundred feet?"

DAVE could see the huge Korlon clearly, in the reflection of him on the far wall. He was naked from the waist up, with magnificent muscles cloaking his broad chest and shoulders. His face was that of a Jovian, but more rugged, with brute ferocity in the warp of his mouth.

He laid a powerful hand upon an apparatus that looked like an anti-aircraft gun. "This gun already shoot that far," he growled. "No danger shoot it. But great danger if we turn out enough power to give such range to hand weapons. Why you ask?"

"Because we've got to do it!" Kaley cut in. "We could waste days and hundreds of men trying to trap them in the tunnels. And they've got to die! With a range of four hundred feet or so, we could cut straight through the ground to them without taking a risk ourselves!"

Garth's great head nodded slowly. "Marnok say not safe to space the rings farther apart than now. Maybe safe for a few minutes. We try it!"

His huge body lumbered across the room. He spun a wheel a few turns. Beyond the windows, the rings spaced themselves out. Dave's eyes widened as the column of bronze grew silvery. A low hum filled the room.

"Give the order!" Kaley hissed. "The sooner they're safely taken care

of, the better chance for you!"

Eagerly, the great Korlon took up a transformer-like arrangement and placed it against his head-disk. This time his words were unintelligible to Dave. But in the battlefield, dense clouds of black smoke began to arise! The warriors had withdrawn to start their deadly attack.

Then Kaley's voice tugged at Dave's attention. "Funny that young upstart of yours didn't come along," he probed thoughtfully. "I'd better have a look, Garth. It would be convenient to have the whole gang right here where we can finish them at our leisure."

Desperation snagged through the young scientist. He shot a wild look about. The stairway was devoid of shelter. Kaley's steps thudded nearer. With a groan of despair, Dave swung under the rail of the stairway and grabbed the edge of the step. He swung down.

Underneath the staircase were a number of ragged bolt-ends. Gripping a pair of them firmly, he let himself dangle there a good thirty feet from the floor.

Kaley could be heard to pass down the stairs a flight and then pause. At last, when blood was trickling down the physicist's arms from the gashing of ragged metal, he returned.

"No sign of him," was his decision. "Give that wheel another quarter turn, Garth. I want this——"

His words broke with the slamming of the door. Instantly Dave had scrambled back to safety. Without a second's pause, he raced back down the stairway and plunged into the tunnel, closing it behind him.

He was sick with the dread that he could not reach the Jovians in time to save them and Helen from cremation. Stronger still was the certainty that he could never get help back to save his father and the old prospectors from a horrible end. . . .

CHAPTER VI

The Last Attack

THE tunnel had grown almost unbearably hot even before he reached the caverns. He stumbled along in a half-daze, sweat oozing from his tortured body, and his lungs spasmodically caving and swelling with each rasping breath.

Helen was the first to see him when he staggered into the main room. "Dave!" she cried. She came running across the cavern to him. And even in the poor light, he could see the wild desperation in her face. Worry, pain, terror, burned in her eyes.

For a moment Dave held her tightly in the circle of his arms. Then Marnok's excited words brought him back to reality.

"What's happened? The heat—it's killed a dozen already! Did you find ——"

"We found Kaley and Garth in the control room," Dave bit out. "They captured them but didn't see me. Garth has the power on to the four-hundred foot point for small weapons. They're trying to burn you to carbon from the surface."

"Four—hundred—feet!" the ruler gasped. "He'll ignite the whole Tower! The walls are insulated to stand only forty units. That power is equal to sixty!"

"But in case he doesn't cremate the lot of them," Dave suggested tersely, "I propose we get back and take the city while the Korlons are out. Or—are you ready to fight yet?"

Marnok's eyes dropped. "We have been weak," he said. "Fighting was unknown to us. But we are ready

now! Tell us what we must do."

Fifty voices—voices that dinned in Dave's mind, though the cavern was almost silent—greeted his statement. Crude weapons and rocks were brandished by eager Jovians. They crowded the exit tunnel so that Dave could scarcely control them.

So they advanced, Dave and Marnok in the lead, Helen and the Jovian women in back. Five more died from the cruel, blistering heat of the smoking walls before they had reached the Tower of Light once more.

They poured from the trap door like ants. The thunder of their charging up the stairs shook the tower. Dave sprinted in the front of the phalanx. The entire Tower of Light was softly aglow with the overload of Arthonite upon it. The column that had been bronze now gleamed like burnished gold.

Then suddenly Dave was shouting a warning as the door to the control room flew open. Brand Kaley and the monster, Garth, stepped out with pistols in each fist.

They commenced firing without warning. Half a dozen screaming shots burst among the invaders. Dave felt the death concussion of one of the bolts buffet him. Ten of the Jovians tumbled over the side of the stairs. Now a change came over the faces of the defenders. Garth glanced at his weapons, shaking them. Unexpectedly, he flung them at the attackers. The answer sprang into Dave's mind.

The overload on the tower burnt out the delicate mechanism of the guns!

THREE hurtling shapes burst from the room behind them. Bill Harrigan launched a headlong dive at Garth, his big hands outstretched. But the giant Korlon nimbly sidestepped the prospector and gained the room. Kaley followed him. The great door thundered shut. Bars clattered into place.

For ten minutes the Jovians battered at the door with rocks and fists, before they gave up. And then it was only because Marnok, glancing down into the city, saw the Korlon hordes returning!

In an instant they were racing down the steps once more, with Dave's shout ringing in their ears: "Get out of the city. In the open we may have a chance!"

At least, the Korlons had no weapons either, now. But the Earthmen could not help wonder, when they compared the Jovian slender forms with the rugged, brute bodies of the monsters. . . .

A shout beat up from the Korlons when they caught sight of their fleeing enemies. Four hundred strong, they swerved down the streets after them. Apprehension built heavily in Dave Weston. His father and the older Jovians were weakening fast. Somehow, he must find craft to supplant brawn.

Up ahead yawned the open gate of the city. Courage seemed to warm his veins with the sight of the broken, weird landscape of the desert. Out there they could lead them a chase for hours, dodging, weaving, doubling back. Dave settled on a desperate chance.

Working close to Marnok, he panted: "Lead your people down the next sidestreet. We'll decoy the Korlons outside. Wait a few minutes, then go back and try to break into the tower. It's our only chance."

Marnok nodded grimly. As soon as a corner had separated them from the view of the monsters, he led his faithful band back into the heart of the city. Dave, his father, Helen, and the two old timers sped on into the maze of peaks and hollows. The drumming roar

of pursuit was, paradoxically, a satisfying sound in their ears.

But Dave had not counted on his father's being so wasted with his horrible week in the caverns. Twice he fell and had to be helped to his feet. At each stumbling stride, the Korlons slashed the gap smaller. Helen was as lithe and fleet as an antelope. Bill and Mac blew like grampuses but kept up their end of the deal. Just after the five of them won the top of a plateau, a new element rose up to stagger them.

From the Tower of Light came a hissing roar. A huge pit appeared at the side of the rumors. Charles Weston groaned. "The long range gun! We haven't a chance!"

"I'd give my hopes of findin' a pay streak a mile wide to have one chance at Kaley," gasped Mac Barwell. "Bad News'd fill him so full of lead he'd sink in his own tallow."

"It's just like I said," Harrigan pronounced dolefully, "things allus turn out for the worst. You can't beat bad luck; when it's on you, it's on you."

The Korlons stopped, giving them an opportunity to rest. But rest was denied them by the earth-shaking force of the Arthonite bolts. Time and again they were all hurled to the ground. Dirt covered them from head to foot.

Helen struggled up from a particularly narrow escape. "Maybe we could make it out of the valley," she suggested.

"And be shrivelled up like ants on a hot stove," Dave grunted. "It looks like the game is Kaley's. Marnok couldn't have reached the tower yet." On the point of struggling on again, he panted wearily, "Dad, you decide. Shall we spend our last minutes ducking Kaley's cannon-shots, or end it quick by leaving?"

Charles Weston swayed on his feet. His face was gray with horror. But his reply was never to come. For suddenly an eager light kindled in his tired eyes. "Look!" he shouted. "The tower—*it's on fire!*"

ALL eyes swung to the slender spire. Mac Barwell swallowed.

"Wash my britches in sheep-dip!" he hackled. "It looks like a branding iron left in the fire too long!"

The description was an apt one. The rings of Arthonite glowed with an unearthly green light, while the tower itself had become a ruby red. The heat of it was terrible to contemplate.

Silence, complete and empty, blanketed over Lost Valley. The Korlons slowly turned to watch the thing their greed was doing. Hungry flames licked up and down the side of the Tower of Light. The tall windows melted, the molten glass creeping like tears down the walls.

The great tower commenced to warp, to bend and buckle. Then two tiny figures appeared at the top of the structure. They leaped, arms and legs flying wildly. Halfway to the ground, they struck one of the Arthonite rings. Twin puffs of white smoke went up. It was as though a pair of luckless flies had run into a live wire.

Seconds later, a thin cry drifted across the valley to their ears. Brand Kaley had died with his wealth unspent.

The Tower of Light slowly sank in a twisting fall. And as it crashed across the city, a strange thing took place.

The harsh green light faded. A shadow passed over the watchers. Between them and the city a shimmering, iridescent veil stretched, covering the city like a dome. Dave whirled, afraid of the thing he was to see.

Behind them loomed the Last Chance Mountains! Clear and gaunt in the late afternoon light, they towered over

the valley of death. Everywhere was the familiar, barren aspect of Death Valley. Rock and shrub and mountain range, they testified plainly to the tragedy. With the destruction of much of the Arthonite, the plane had shrunk, leaving them . . . *outside the veil!*

They stood there like prisoners awaiting the firing squad. Not a word was spoken. Suddenly Dave awoke to the realization that the Korlons had ceased to move. He peered closely at them. In scattered heaps, they lay over the valley's floor—dead. Not a limb stirred. With the first ray of sunlight, their bodies had shrivelled.

A pulse began to pound in his head. "Dead!" he whispered. Then: "Dad! Helen! The Korlons—they're dead and we're—we're alive. The cosmic rays haven't hurt us!"

Out of a long silence came Charles Weston's voice. "Marnok was wrong. It must take years for Arthonite's weak radiations to affect the body. Thank God for that! But Marnok and his people—I wonder . . ."

TOGETHER they went down the slope and wound through the rocky terrain to the shining plane. Fearlessly, this time, they stepped through it. It was almost dark inside. The gap in the city wall was before them, and they hurried toward it.

Scarcely had they gained the broad streets when Marnok and a few Jovians appeared around a corner, hurrying toward them.

The tall ruler seemed tremendously relieved. "We feared for you!" he said. "Had you been left outside the dome when it shrank——"

Weston smiled. "That is just what did happen," he explained. "But the only ones who suffered were the Korlons. Marnok, my friend, there isn't a man of them left."

The coppery face lighted up. "I am glad," Marnok said simply. "For you, especially. There is nothing to prevent you from returning home once more."

"But what about yourselves?" Dave asked. "The Tower of Light is gone. What will keep the protective rays from dying out now?"

"Nothing." Marnok spoke rather sadly, yet hope still shone in his countenance. "Within fifty years not an atom of the metal will remain. But by that time many Jovians will have been born and reared in shells of lead. They will have been transplanted into your world, to learn new things and teach you all we have learned."

Dave nodded understandingly. "We'll find you some place a little better than Death Valley to live in, too, where you can get water and food without making a lifelong job of it."

Charles Weston glanced anxiously toward the outside of the city. Obviously, he was impatient to hurry back and astound the scientific world."

Marnok smiled. "We will have many more meetings, you and I," he told them. "Now we both have much to do. Until you return, my friends——"

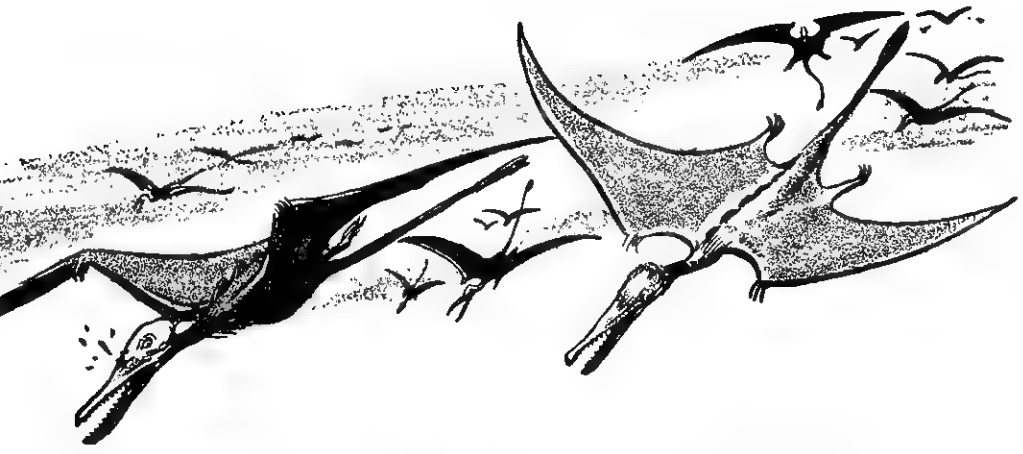
His hand lifted in salute that the others acknowledged in kind. Then they were striding back through the shining veil to look for the burros. Bill was muttering about the long walk confronting them. Then he suddenly remembered something else.

"God!" he exploded. "Almost had my hands on a hunk of it the size of a battleship, and let it get away from me. Its like I always say——"

"What use you got for gold?" Mac snorted. "All you'd do is buy burros and rotgut and go lookin' for more—like always. You got no kick comin, you catankerous old varmint. You're lucky to have a whole skin!"

Cokie's hunt for wealth took him from Flophouse Row to the Mesozoic Age—and from there to a courtroom!

"Here's where I get me a pigeon!" Cokie yelled, and pulled the trigger



COKIE GOES TREASURE HUNTING

By BERKELEY LIVINGSTON

"AN' I'M telling ya, the 'perfessor' ain't nuts!"

Sylvester "Cokie" Mokie's voice was a high, angry squeak. His words were directed at Moe Maybrick, the fat little proprietor of Moe's Mansion.

"Well," Moe grunted, as his pudgy body searched for a more comfortable resting place against the rough bricks which bordered the entrance of his tenth-rate flophouse, "you may be right, Cokie, but I wouldn't lay money on it."

"Wha' d'ya mean, Moe?" Cokie demanded. He was perched on a metal refuse box, near the curb and directly opposite the entrance to the Mansion.

Moe looked at Cokie for a moment before replying. The reason for Sylvester Mokie's better known name was his predilection for that narcotic, cocaine. In other words, Cokie was a snow-bird. And if he was "high on it," Moe knew the uselessness of conversation. But his look satisfied him that the little man on the refuse container was still in this world.

"It isn't in the cards," Moe explained. "That little gadget he carries. Those X's he makes on the sidewalk. He's been doing it for ten years now and nobody knows why."

"Ya know what I think," Cokie said. "I think the perfessor's looking for buried treasure, that's what! Ain't that right, Finnegan?"

Traffic Officer Finnegan had just stepped out of the Manhattan Tea Room and on seeing Moe and Cokie arguing, had come over to join them. Finnegan's breath held a pleasant aroma, but it wasn't from tea. If it was, it was the first tea that ever bore the label, "100 Proof."

Finnegan stood beside Moe at the entrance to the flophouse and patted his

perspiring face. He had the sort of face that is always perspiring.

"Well now," he said between pats, "I wouldn't know what the professor's looking for. Nobody knows, because he's never said why he makes those marks on sidewalks. Or what's in that gadget he carries."

"See, what'd I tell ya, Moe?" Cokie triumphantly exclaimed, as though Finnegan had corroborated what was in his mind. "He's looking for buried treasure, that's what. And that's why he makes those X's on the sidewalk!"

"Well I'm certaintly glad we got that straightened out," Moe said sourly, as he turned to go back into his office.

Finnegan, whose hopes for a little bit of gabbing before going on post were shattered by Moe's somewhat abrupt departure, also left.

But Cokie didn't notice their going. He was waiting for the professor. He had been watching the clock for the past half hour and he knew that the professor would soon show up.

For the past two days the professor had come around at about four o'clock; just before the rush hour began. And yesterday something had happened which had never happened before. Cokie was waiting to see if the same thing would happen today.

Johann Van Shnook, better known as the professor, was talking to himself as he walked down Clark Street.

"Ten long years! Ten years of being laughed at, insulted, being called mad. But no more! I was right."

His voice was a mumble. None of the passersby he jostled in his long-legged shambling shuffle would have understood anyway.

"If only," the monologue went on, "the batteries are strong enough for the detector, today."

The fingers of his free hand furtively caressed the batteries in his jacket pocket. Two lead wires ran from the batteries to the object he carried in his right hand. And the object looked like nothing more than a vari-colored glass ball attached to a stick, into which the wires led.

If the object in Van Shnook's hand created curiosity, the man himself was enough to set people to staring. There was something in his gaunt frame and long bony face with its huge beaked nose and deep set eyes, that reminded one of a stork. A stork wearing ill-fitting clothes.

VAN SHNOOK reached Fourth and Clark. He turned down Fourth and walked down to where Cokie was sitting. After making certain he was properly oriented, the professor began walking in a criss-cross pattern on the sidewalk. His thumb had flicked a tiny switch set in the handle of the gadget he carried. Now and then little flickers of light would come to life in the glass ball.

In his excitement, Cokie could barely contain himself. Then, not satisfied with watching, he left his seat on the box and began to follow Van Shnook about. He noticed how the glass ball would light up momentarily then go dark again. He also saw that when this occured, the professor would stop, kneel and mark the sidewalk with an X.

Cokie remembered that this same thing had occurred the day before. And that the professor had begun to close the gap between the X's, as though he were narrowing a number of possibilities to a positive point. But something had gone wrong.

Not today, however. Van Shnook seemed to glow with some inner excitement. Then it happened; Cokie saw the glass ball light up as though it were a pinball machine. For a few seconds there was a strange purple haze around

the glass. Then the haze and the many colored lights vanished and all that was left on the inside was a cloud of what appeared to be white smoke.

When the glass ball became filled with smoke Van Shnook marked the spot with an X much larger than any of the others. He also used a crayon which left an oily, paint-like mark.

Cokie was so interested in the proceedings he almost went to his knees. But the professor wasn't conscious of Cokie's presence. Nor of any of the passersby either, for that matter.

So it was that he didn't know Cokie overheard what he said aloud:

"My deductions were correct. This is the spot. And now I must return to the Cosmograph for a final adjustment and then—the treasures of the future will be mine!"

He arose so suddenly that Cokie barely had time to get out of his way. Without a backward glance Van Shnook set off in the direction of LaSalle Street. And Cokie was directly behind him. The word "treasure," had started a train of thought in Cokie's mind that he intended to ride to earth. And the first step in Cokie's plan was to find out where the professor lived.

Van Shnook turned north on LaSalle, Cokie a dozen feet behind him. Through the Loop, over the bridge, past Chicago Avenue, the chase led. Finally, near North Avenue, Van Shnook, now a suddenly purposeful figure, walked up the stairs of an old-fashioned red-bricked residence.

Cokie was stumped for a few minutes. He had found out where the professor lived. Now what?

He noticed a passageway alongside the house. "H'm," he ruminated, "let's see where this goes."

It led to a run-down affair, which in the '90's must have been the latest in coach-houses, but just now looked like a fine place for ghosts to play bridge in.

After making certain he was unobserved, Cokie walked over for a closer examination. He peered through one of the grimy windows but it was too dark inside to see much. So Cokie tried the door. It opened to his touch.

A FORD sedan, mounted on a set of tires which had gone out of style with the boyish bob, took up most of the floor space. He opened one of the car doors and his startled eyes saw something which made him sit on the running-board for a few minutes.

"So Moe and Finnegan think the perfessor's nuts! If they could only see what I just saw. And," Cokie's thoughts ran riot, "if they knew about the treasure—but they don't. I'm the only one that does. Me and the perfessor. And if I stick close to him, maybe——"

Cokie was almost afraid to think of what might happen then. Too, all this effort of thinking had made him a little edgy. The gloom and stillness began to hide a thousand menaces. Cokie felt the need of a "shot."

From one of the pockets of his vest he pulled a square little box, marked "For Headaches Only." Within, were seven round white tablets. He took one, closed the box and returned it to the vest pocket. From the lapel of his jacket, he took a pin and made a circular incision in the face of the tablet. Then, with a practiced gesture, he emptied the contents of the hollow tablet upon the base of his thumb.

Carefully, yet with an almost casual motion, he brought the thumb, with its powdered, cystal burden to his nostrils. Two sniffs; and his thumb showed clean. Cokie was ready for anything now.

He got off the running-board and opened the car door again. He peered

closely at the large glass ball which rested on the floor-boards. The ball, which was about two feet in diameter, held an intricate arrangement of tubes and wires. Their meaning and purposes were beyond Cokie's reasoning powers. But of one thing he was certain: This glass ball and its contents had something to do with the treasure.

Cokie's speculations were interrupted by the creaking sound of the garage door being opened. His small body found a dark corner to hide in. His eyes, used to the semi-dark now, saw that it was the professor who had come in.

Van Shnook opened the front door of the car, stepped in and started the motor. Then he turned in the seat and put his hand down to the under side of the glass ball. His fingers found a switch in the wooden base on which the ball rested. He pressed it and a low, whirring, humming sound emanated from the ball. The wires inside glowed white and the tubes sent off streamers of blue sparks.

Cokie suddenly felt fear take hold of him. For a moment he had the desire to run out of the place. But Van Shnook was talking again.

"It synchronizes perfectly; but will it register over the fault?" Van Shnook's sigh was audible to Cokie, who also noticed that the professor no longer mumbled. His voice was now clear and purposeful.

"Ten hours from now and I will know what they mean when they say 'time will tell.'"

After those cryptic words, Van Shnook pressed the switch again. The wires and tubes went dark. He got out of the car and went back to the house.

Cokie watched him go, a wide grin on his face.

"So he'll know in ten hours, will he?" he cackled. "That means *both* of us will!"

He went back to the corner where he had hidden. From the floor he lifted a blanket and carried it to the car. After spreading it over the back seat, he crawled under it and fell asleep.

He was still asleep when Van Shnook returned. The professor opened the folding doors to the garage, stepped into the Ford and without a backward look, drove out. It was almost four in the morning when he reached the deserted corner of Clark and Fourth.

Van Shnook left the motor running and stepped out onto the sidewalk. He walked over to where he had marked the walk with the paint-like X. After making certain it was still there, he returned to the car. Then, twisting the wheels over onto the sidewalk, he carefully maneuvered the car over the X.

COKIE was awakened by the jolting of the wheels as they passed over the curb. He peered out from under the blanket, when the car finally stoped, and saw the professor reach down and press the switch on the bottom of the ball again. And again there was the business of the wires turning white with heat and sparks shooting from the tubes. Intermingling with the whirring and humming was a loud crackling, like static over a radio. The humming grew louder and louder until the sound of it filled Cokie's brain. Every nerve in his body seemed to vibrate in tune with the humming. He tried to sit up. The blanket slipped onto the floor. Suddenly there was a loud, explosive sound. The glass ball became filled with a cloud of milky vapor. A purplish haze surrounded it. And with that, Cokie lost consciousness. . . .

. . . Cokie began to wish this subway ride would end soon. The papers said the subway was a noisy affair, but this

roaring sound was too much for him.

"I wanta get off," Cokie said, and opened his eyes.

It was daylight and his bewildered eyes took in the broad expanse of grassland, visible from the side windows of the car. But the roaring sound was still to be heard. In fact, it seemed to be coming nearer.

Cokie looked through the rear window to discover where it was coming from. What he saw brought a shriek of horror to his lips.

"YEOW! It's real; Quick, perfessor, get the car moving, before it's to late!"

Van Shnook had also regained consciousness on hearing the roaring sound, and Cokie's cry of horror startled him into action. He set the car into motion, took just one look into the rear vision mirror and then his foot pressed the accelerator to the floor-boards.

It was a lucky thing for them that the ground was level. For otherwise they might not have made it. As it was, it took ten minutes of furious driving to elude what was chasing them. And that was only because it found something of greater interest.

Van Shnook drove on for a few minutes, then stopped the car. He looked at Cokie for a second, and said:

"Get out!"

Cokie got out. Van Shnook followed him. The two men faced each other: Van Shnook, tall, gaunt and suddenly dynamic looking; and the undersized dope addict. Cokie saw a terrible anger in the other's face and felt a fear as great as when he saw the monster which had chased them. Suddenly Van Shnook shook his head and his features became calm again.

Cokie became aware of the intense, humid heat of this strange place. The ordeal which they had just gone through made his legs feel weak and lifeless. He decided to sit down before he fell down.

"What was it?" he asked.

"What was what?" Van Shnook demanded.

"That thing that chased us?"

"Oh that. A dinosaur."

Cokie thought: Now what the hell is a dinosaur? And where the hell are we? And how——

"—the hell did you get in the car," Van Shnook said, breaking in on Cokie's thoughts.

"Huh?" said Cokie.

"I said, how did you get in the car?"

Cokie looked down at the ground. Then he looked up at the cloudless sky. Finally, he looked to the horizon to either side of Van Shnook.

"Well?" Van Shnook said.

Cokie heaved a sigh of resignation. And told everything. From the beginning.

"I'll be damned;" Van Shnook exclaimed when Cokie had finished. "So you thought I was hunting buried treasure. Treasure buried under the pavement of a Loop street. And did you ever ask yourself who buried this supposed treasure or how I was going to get at it?"

Cokie shook his head in bewilderment.

"Gee, perfessor, I didn't think of that. But everybody said you were nuts, going around with that glass ball on a stick and making marks on the sidewalk. The only thing I could think of was buried treasure."

"Yes, I see." Van Shnook said thoughtfully. "Of course they thought I was mad. But they would be convinced of it had I told the true object of my search."

"What do you mean, perfessor?" Cokie asked curiously.

Van Shnook sat down beside Cokie on the running board.

"What is your name, my friend?" he asked.

"Sylvester Mokie," Cokie replied; "but everybody calls me Cokie."

"Very well, Cokie. I am Johann Van Shnook. Probably the greatest scientist the world has ever known."

"Ya don't say," interjected Cokie.

"I do, Cokie. And what is more I have proved it."

"Yeah? How?"

"By proving we can go into time."

Cokie looked blank, at that.

VAN SHNOOK smiled at the expression on Cokie's face.

"I'll make it simple for you, Cokie," he said. "Time—past, present and future—exist simultaneously. When we say past, present, future, we speak in relative terms. Just as we do when we speak of size. Do you understand, Cokie?"

Cokie's brow was knit in thought. Somehow the words held a meaning for him.

"Ya mean that though we're here now, we're also in a car in front of Moe's Mansion?"

"Well, not quite, Cokie. But perhaps a mile away," Van Shnook replied.

"I don't get it, perfessor. Not all of it, anyway. F'r instance, where are we?"

"Somehow I made a mistake," Van Shnook said reflectively. "My intentions were to go into the future. H'm," he sighed, "my hypothesis had a reverse premise. As a consequence, I made a mistake."

He looked around him, and turned to smile at Cokie. "Yes, Cokie, I made a mistake all right. Instead of the future, we are back in the past. Several hundred thousand years into the past. This Cokie," he concluded, "is what Chicago looked like a milleniums ago."

"Holy smoke, Perfessor, what'll we do?"

"We're here Cokie. So we'll stay awhile and see what's what. Get in the car and we'll take a ride."

Cokie sat in bewildered silence while Van Shnook drove. Van Shnook commented on everything: the heavy, moist heat; the topography; the flora and fauna—everything.

"Think of it, Cokie," he said, "we're the first humans of our day to see a living dinosaur. Perhaps we shall see a brontosaurus or the flying reptile known as the pterodactyl. Wouldn't that be something to remember?"

"Look, Perfessor," Cokie said sourly, "if the rest of the animals in this world are like the first one we met, I could just as easily do without. But to tell ya the truth, that ain't what's bothering me."

"All right Cokie. What is bothering you?"

"How do we get back?"

"A very sensible question indeed. And fortunately for us, I have the answer. Attached to the Cosmograph behind us is a very delicate device. Later, when we want to return, I shall show you how to start this device. Once it is started it will automatically bring us back to our starting point."

"That's fine, Perfessor," Cokie said in a tone of relief, "but let's not run out of gas. Or we'll never get back."

"Even that won't matter, Cokie, as I can prove. But right now, we're going to do a little exploring—on foot."

With that, Van Shnook applied the brake, shut off the motor and stepped out. He opened the rear door and pulled two rifles from the rear seat. He handed one to the very much surprised Cokie, and leaning the other against the car, reached in and pulled out two full bandoliers of cartridges.

"I didn't think I'd have a passen-

ger," he said as he pulled the loaded bandoliers snug to his waist. "The other rifle was for emergency use. I only hope you know how to use it, Cokie."

"Do I know how to use a rifle!" Cokie said in a voice of pride. "Why, I was a sharpshooter in the last war."

"Fine, Cokie, fine. Then remember this: If it becomes necessary to shoot, aim for their eyes. They have very little nervous system and only a tiny brain. Still a bullet in that brain will stop them."

Van Shnook noticed that Cokie was no longer listening to him. Instead, the little man had his head cocked to one side, as though he heard something in the distance. Van Shnook, too, assumed an air of quiet attention. Soon the sound which Cokie had first heard became clearly audible.

"Look!" Cokie demanded, pointing with a finger.

VAN SHNOOK looked in the direction of Cokie's outstretched hand and saw, sailing down the wind on slow-flapping wings, the figure of a gigantic bird. Soon it was close enough for the two men to make out it's great beak with wide rows of long sharp teeth.

Behind the first were others, until a full dozen of the huge creatures circled over their heads, hissing as though a thousand teakettles were set to work in their long leathery throats.

"Pterodactyls," Van Shnook whispered.

The two men, their rifles held ready, waited to see what would happen. Nor did they have long to wait.

For with a last explosive hiss, the first of the flying reptiles launched itself in a headlong dive at the two men. Van Shnook fired even as the frightful looking bird folded back its wings. Twice he fired, without effect. Then when it seemed that nothing could stop its dive, Cokie squeezed the trigger of his rifle. For a second Van Shnook thought Cokie had missed. But the reptile never came out of its dive. It landed heavily, flopped around once or twice, then lay still. Cokie, after that one shot, paid no heed to the reptile he had aimed at. His entire attention was taken up in watching the others. Whether it was the high, clanging report of the shots or something else which took their eyes, the two men never knew; but suddenly the remainder of the flying reptiles flew off.

Van Shnook walked over to the dead animal. A thin trickle of some sort of reddish-colored fluid dripped from its great-fanged mouth. He noticed that Cokie's shot had penetrated the right eye and being a soft-nosed bullet had mushroomed on contact with the reptile's bone structure. The dead body emitted a vile and nauseous odor which prevented any further examination of it.

Van Shnook turned and walked back to Cokie, who was still intent on the fast disappearing bird-lizards. There was admiration and respect in his voice when he said:

"Cokie, that was truly a wonderful shot."

Van Shnook had to marvel at the change which had taken place in Cokie since the reptile fell. Cokie's face had, up till that moment, worn a fluid hang-dog expression. But now those loose weak lines had hardened and set into a stern mold. Even his eyes, those drug-doped empty orbs, had taken on a new measure of life and determination. It was in his voice too.

"Yes, Perfessor," Cokie said quietly, "it was a good shot. But I told you I was a sharpshooter."

"I know you did, Sylvester," Van Shnook replied, making a point of using Cokie's given name, "but that was

a long time ago. But you can shoot."

Cokie's mouth twisted up in a wry grin. "Yep," he said, "it was a long time ago. But when I brought the rifle to my shoulder, it seemed like yesterday. Listen Perfessor," he said suddenly, "you said we're going exploring. Well let's get cuttin', before the sun goes down."

Van Shnook looked up at the sun, just starting to slant toward the western horizon.

"I'd say we had another four hours left before sundown," he said.

Cokie looked over his shoulder and nodded agreement.

"That's about right. Now look over there," Cokie said, pointing to an area of dark green on their left. "Looks like forest to me. Wanta investigate?"

Van Shnook's answer was to start off in the direction of the forest. Cokie caught up to him and they walked side by side.

The forest proved to be nearer than they anticipated. A long low slope gave the perspective a misleading appearance. In an hour they reached the first line of trees. Here they paused and held a conference.

"What do you expect to find?" Cokie wanted to know.

"From what I've read of this period and from what we've already encountered, I'd say that all we would find in there is swampland and dinosaurs," Van Shnook replied.

"Say," Cokie said exasperatedly, "is that all there is in this world?"

"That's about all," Van Shnook assured him.

"Well then, let's look around for a while and get back to where we started from. And I mean Chicago. And after we get back home, we're going to go into the future, right?"

"Right," said Van Shnook, smiling at Cokie. "I just want to see what it looks like in there. We'll go together."

THE appearance of this forest was far more forbidding than any they had imagined. Huge moss-hung trees sent their trunks hundreds of feet into the air. Ferns, fifty feet high, made a matted undergrowth, difficult to walk through.

After breaking through the tangled maze of vines and creepers, Cokie and Van Shnook found themselves in a huge glade, fully half a mile across.

"It's as though we were in some green tunnel," Van Shnook observed. "Those branches are so thick overhead, the sunlight doesn't come through."

Cokie wiped the persperation from his forehead. He felt as though he had gone swimming with his clothes on.

"Nuts, Perfessor. It's screwy to go further. There's nothing else to see," he said.

"You're right," Van Shnook agreed.

They were at the edge of the underbrush through which they had come, when it happened. A half dozen lassos, made of woven vines, fell about their shoulders. Before they could recover from their surprise, a dozen naked men had leaped upon them. The lassos served as ropes to truss them up. Van Shnook and Cokie looked at their captors with amazement.

"Prehistoric men, but pre-dating even the Piltdown Man," Van Shnook whispered.

So tightly had the savages trussed Cokie that he found it difficult to even turn his head to ask:

"Who're these guys, perfessor?"

"If my eyes weren't seeing them, I'd say they were impossible. Yet here they are, existing in an age before man was supposed to have existed."

"That's fine. But what are they doing to do with us?" Cokie asked.

Van Shnook could only shake his

head to the question. He didn't know.

But whoever they were, they seemed to know what they were doing. Cokie and Van Shnook hung across the shoulders of two men. At a signal the whole group set off at a slow trot toward the other end of the glade. In a little while they reached the forest at that point and set off, in single file, down a narrow forest trail. They traveled, still at that slow trot, down this trail for quite some time. Then, when it seemed to the two men being carried that they would never stop, the trail ended.

For a few seconds, the two captives thought the trail had ended permanently—for them. From a dozen grass-thatched huts set in the clearing into which they had been brought, a horde of savages came pouring. And all — men, women and children—seemed to have but one idea in their minds: The annihiliation of Van Shnook and Cokie.

It was only by the most brutal use of the clubs their captors carried that the village people were beaten off. Then the two captives were picked up again and carried off to one of the grass huts, into which they were flung.

When Cokie had recovered his breath sufficiently, he let out with a string of expletives which would have made a sailor turn green with envy.

"I'm afraid that isn't going to help much," Van Shnook said.

"Yeah, I know, "Cokie said, "but I had to get the steam off my chest."

Silence lay heavy between them for a while. Cokie broke it by asking:

"What d'ya make of these people, Perfessor?"

"They seem to be of limited intelligence," Van Shnook replied. "For instance, although they made these vine lassos, they apparently have never learned to produce fire. They have built these grass huts; yet they wear no garments on their bodies, not even the fur of animals. It is obvious that they do things by imitation. Things which they have seen animals or insects do."

"What was that about fire? I thought I saw a fire burning in the clearing."

"You did Cokie. But you didn't see the native walk up and pick out a blazing brand to carry to his hut. Therefore they know nothing of flint and stone."

SUDDENLY there was the sound of a gunshot. Immediately afterward there came to their startled ears the sound of women screaming and men shouting. A half dozen of the naked savages burst into the hut and prostrated themselves before Van Shnook and Cokie.

The two looked at each other with wonder large in their eyes. But after the naked savages remained in that prostrate position for several moments Van Shnook let out a yell.

"Get up and get these damned ropes off of us."

A half dozen startled faces were lifted from the dirt floor and turned in their direction, but nothing else happened. Van Shnook reasoned that it was the first time they had ever heard anyone talk. And for the first time, he was really worried. Time was passing swiftly and they had to get back to the auto before it became too dark to find it. Then release came in the person of one who was evidently the chief.

As short of stature as the rest, he appeared to be twice as broad across the shoulders. And although there was simple awe in his face, there was no fear there. He stepped over to each of the bound men and loosened the bonds.

After stretching and rubbing cramped muscles, Van Shnook and Cokie followed the chief out into the clearing. The entire village had assembled and, as the two followed the chief, they all

fell face downward into the dirt. The cause of all this sudden veneration was visibly apparent. When Van Shnook and Cokie had been taken captive, someone had brought along their rifles. Some native more curious than the rest had, in examining it, pulled the trigger. A dead native, his head half blown off, lay there before them. To these simple minds, the gun was powerful magic. And since the gun belonged to the two captives, they were powerful magic too.

The chief, running before the two, picked up the rifles and, holding one, handed the other to Cokie. But instead of handing the other to Van Shnook, he tried to show what had happened to the dead native. And before Cokie could stop him, he had pressed the trigger.

Van Shnook was almost knocked off his feet by the shock of the bullet striking him. He felt momentary searing pain high in his chest, then heard Cokie curse as he pulled the trigger of his gun. The chief fell, shot through the head, and as he fell, the rest of the savages broke and raced for the forest.

Cokie kneeled beside Van Shnook. He shook his head at what he saw. Van Shnook looked up at him and a strange, sad smile lighted his features.

"Well, Cokie," he said weakly, "looks as though you will have to go back through Time alone."

Then, as Cokie started to protest, Van Shnook weakly lifted a hand.

"Too late for that. There isn't much time. Got to talk fast. Get back to the car. Switch for return is on right side of ball. Time switch is on the left."

A racking cough brought a thick flow of blood from his lips. Cokie lifted his head to ease him.

"If you run out of gas, Cokie, glass ball can be operated by small batteries. Keep return switch on. Carry ball—will lead to—time—fault."

Even as Cokie started to say he would never leave without him, Van Shnook's body went through the final convulsion of death.

A strangely gentle Cokie took off the jacket he wore and covered the dead man's face. He said a simple, silent prayer for Van Shnook, then started back on the narrow trail. As tired as he was, he went at a trot until he reached the green glade.

DARK shadows were already filling the far edges by the time he reached the thick border of undergrowth. It took almost all the strength he possessed to tear through the thorn-filled creepers. But at last, exhausted and with trousers torn to shreds, he stood on the level plain again.

The sun was almost on the horizon now and Cokie decided to take a chance on throwing the rifle away. He had discarded the heavy cartridge-laden bandolier when he started through the underbrush. And although he thought he might have a need of the rifle, it was too much to carry about.

Halfway to the car, which stood out on the grassy plain like a sign-post pointing the way to home, he tripped over the flapping leg of his trousers. The pants joined the rifle and bandolier. Cokie made a strange figure as he trotted along in his shorts.

Only one other place could have been more welcome than that broken-down old Ford, and that was Moe's Mansion. But Cokie spent very little time in reflection.

He stepped on the starter and the motor came to life with a soul-satisfying roar.

Quickly he reached behind the front seat and pressed the return switch under the glass ball. Seemingly of its

own volition, the steering wheel twisted around and the car started back.

It was a lucky thing for Cokie that he was almost back to the time-fault, when the car ran out of gas. Remembering what the professor had told him, Cokie set about disconnecting the glass ball. It proved to be much easier than he thought. Although the glass ball and batteries were a bulky item to carry, the return switch still worked. It seemed to act like a magnet which set his feet to moving in a certain direction.

Cokie knew he had arrived at the time-fault when the glass ball exerted a terrific downward pull at his arms. Just as he set the Cosmograph on the ground he heard the remembered roar of a dinosaur. But this time there was no car to help his escape. And the antediluvian monster was already bearing down on him.

Cokie pressed the time switch while the dinosaur, roaring with rage, its monstrous snout wide open in anticipation, came closer and closer.

Cokie thought the wires would never begin to glow and the tubes to throw their familiar sparks. The beast was only a few feet away when the haze formed around the glass, and with the sound of the time-explosion, Cokie heard the great gnashing sound of the dinosaur's mouth close in a fruitless search for him.

The familiar sound of an elevated train brought Cokie back to consciousness. That, and a voice saying:

"Here, you! What do you think this is—a bathing beach?"

Cookie's eyes burned with a strange fire, and all his bones and muscles ached intolerably.

He opened his tired eyes and looked about.

He was seated again on the refuse box in front of Moe's Mansion. Before him was the blue-clad figure of one of Chicago's finest. But of the glass ball there was no trace.

"C'mon you," the cop said, hauling Cokie from the box, "I'm taking you in. For indecent exposure."

Cokie looked down at his pantless legs and tried to explain.

"To the judge," said the cop as he hauled Cokie to the call box.

JOHN GRAHAM, the world-famous archaeologist sat on the bench with his best friend, Judge Benson Phillips. Before them were Cokie and the cop.

"There he was, Your Honor, sittin' on the refuse box, just the way you see him now," O'Malley explained.

Judge Phillips looked at the wretched figure of Cokie for a few seconds.

"Suppose you tell the court how it happened that you were in that condition, when Officer O'Malley found you."

Something in the kindly expression of the judge and the man sitting beside him, made Cokie tell the whole story from the beginning.

An expression of utter disbelief stood boldly on the judge's face when Cokie finished his tale. John Graham, however, displayed a lively interest in the story until Cokie reached the part where the natives entered the story. Then he shook his head sadly.

"Man, in the time of dinosaurs," he murmured, "you've read the wrong book, my lad."

A bailiff suddenly appeared and whispered into Judge Phillips ear. The judge looked at the bailiff questioningly for a second then said:

"Officer, search that man!"

Malley began a systematic search of Cokie's vest and shirt pockets. But the only thing brought to light was the box marked, For Headaches Only.

"Bring that box up here," the judge

commanded. "I want to see it."

O'Malley brought the box up and, while Graham and the judge watched, the bailiff broke open one of the tablets as Cokie had done.

"Sylvester Mokie," the judge said, his voice stern, "you are an addict to a vicious habit. It is the opinion of this court that you are no longer in a condition to——"

"Wait, Benson," John Graham broke in. "Officer, will you bring that leaf, which fell out of the prisoner's pocket, up here."

O'Malley picked up the bit of fern which lay on the floor near Cokie's feet and brought it up for Graham's inspection.

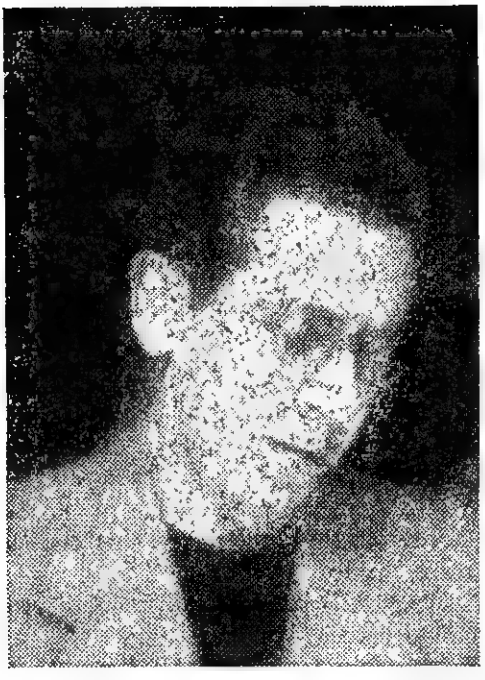
Graham's eyes went wide in wonder as he looked at the bit of greenery in his palm.

"Benson," he said at last, "will you remand the prisoner to my custody?"

"Of course, John." Judge Phillips said, "but why?"

"Because," replied John Graham, "this bit of fern was supposed to have died a half million years ago!"

Meet the Authors



BERKELEY LIVINGSTON

THE fairy tales of my childhood and the stories of Merriwell and kindred heroes of my youth set my fancy free. In my mind, were always evolving newer and better vehicles for their deeds But I am anticipating

I was born in Chicago, November 26, 1908. An incident occurred during my high school years which put my feet on the writing path. Ben Hecht's and Charles MacArthur's play "The Front Page" was running in a Loop playhouse. I played hookey one afternoon and went down to the Loop with the most honorable intentions. I was going to do research at the Public Library. It was certainly no fault of mine that my feet led me to the lobby of that theatre. To my surprise I found, after paying the required price, that I had acquired a seat to "The Front Page."

So impressed did I become with Hildy Johnson, the central character in the play, that I resolved to become a reporter. Well, there are various ways of doing that. I went to a midwest university school of journalism for two years before I discovered that could be the wrong way. It was during my sophomore year that I made the horrible discovery that perhaps the path of journalism would never be trod upon by my feet.

It was a chance remark of a professor of a certain course that I was taking that sent me out into the world without a college degree He stood up in class one day and said, "Students (no, it wasn't Kay Kyser), there has arrived a period in your course when I find it necessary to bring a certain truth to your attention: that whatever success you may have in your career will depend upon the amount of labor you put into it—particularly the career all of you here have chosen . . . writing . . . because yours will be a labor of the brain. And let me assure you that thinking can be much more difficult than anything else."

Somehow I lost my taste for journalism as of that moment. I had always been under the impression that reporters led a life of wine, women and song. Now I was being told that they also worked!

The next several years of my life were spent in a succession of "got a job—lost a job." In 1936 I met a friend of mine in San Francisco whom I hadn't seen in a number of years. He had been working as a research man for a large chemical manufacturer. But something had come up which made him leave the position he had held. We sat in a fishy water-front grotto talking over old days in Chicago, when a remark cut through the smoky air of that dive which led to the most serious undertaking of my life. It led, in fact, to my becoming a writer. One of us said: "And do you remember how we used to invent fantasies of South Sea life?" We looked at each other wordlessly. I pulled out my bank book and saw that I had saved up the goodly sum of $800.00. Within two weeks we were on our way to Hawaii, the first step in a South Sea tour which took two years. Two years spent in paradise.

But $800.00 did not last forever. And so I found myself back in San Francisco, enriched in spirit and knowledge, but poor in purse.

Walking past a newsstand one day I picked up a magazine called *South Sea Stories*—and the great adventure began. I had lived there, knew the native life, knew all there was to be known about it. I decided then and there to do a story based upon an incident I had seen take place in Samoa. I sent it off to the editors of that magazine and in a short while received a check. My first story and my first check.—*Berkeley Livingston.*

PHILATELIC "TREASURE"

POSTAL envelopes which may become one of the greatest philatelic prizes of the war, will soon reach the outside world from Merauke, capital of that part of Dutch New Guinea which has remained free from Japanese invasion.

Netherlands East Indies postal authorities in Merauke have been so overwhelmed with letters mailed by Allied soldiers that their supply of stamps has been completely exhausted. For the duration, a rubber stamp has been devised to substitute for the regular postage stamps. The rubber stamp impression in Dutch and English, respectively, reads "Frankeering Betaald" and the translation into English, "Postage Paid." The envelopes will bear the regular Merauke date stamp.

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Scientific

WIDELY SCATTERED RACES OF MAN HAVE A STARTLING SIMILARITY OF STORIES ABOUT THE DRAGON; USING IT AS AN IMAGE ON THE PROW OF SHIPS; AS AN EVIL SEA MONSTER; AS A TOTEM. DOES THIS MEAN THAT THE ROOT SOURCE IS THE SAME FOR ALL?

THE MAYAS OF THE LEGENDARY CITY OF XIBALBA SACRIFICED CHILDREN TO THE DRAGON. THE ADVENT OF THE TOLTECS STOPPED THIS SAVAGE TOTEM TRIBUTE

LEGEND SAYS THE AMAZONS, THOSE WARRIOR WOMEN OF SOUTH AMERICA, CROSSED THE ATLANTIC AFTER THEIR DEFEAT BY THE LYBIAN MONARCH, HERAKLES, TO ESTABLISH A NEW EMPIRE FOR THEMSELVES IN THE MATTO GROSSO JUNGLES

Mysteries

TRACKING DOWN THE DRAGON

By L. TAYLOR HANSEN

What is the answer to the mystery of the worldwide use of the dragon as a totem?

ACROSS the folk-memories (for that is what legends are)—across the folk-memories of five continents has fallen the symbol of an ancient colossus, the shadow of a dreaded sea-power whose symbol lives on after the kingdom which fostered it has passed from the knowledge of living men—The Giant Dragon. Is there any connection between the stories of old Europe which regarded The Dragon as an evil sea-monster, although they placed his image upon the prow of their ships; the mysterious veiled Tuaraks of Northern Africa who regard the symbol as their Totem; many of the Indian tribes of both Americas who have the same reverence; and the similar regard of vast hordes in Asia? Was it a power of Asia, the Americas or Northern Africa? Those are the people who today still hold it in the greatest reverence. And yet when we glance at their racial types, what a shock is in store for us! At one end of the scale is the long-headed, long faced Tuarak, who among his Berber kinsmen is placed in the extreme end of the long-head scale. In the Americas the type is greatly mixed and blends to the round-head as we go toward the Aleuttians, until in Asia we find the true round head with his extremely straight hair, still regarding The Dragon as his ancient Totem!

If anything is to be made of this puzzle, we must seek for the answer in the Americas. Here at least we may be able to discover whether The Dragon invaded the land from the Atlantic or the Pacific.

Perhaps our first discovery is that although The Dragon is always regarded as connected with water, yet it is not always looked upon as a deity whose realm is good and whose occupations are above the suspicion of mischief. Indeed on the contrary, there are many tribes who look upon it as an evil spirit. Such is the belief of the Tarahumaras of the highlands of Northern Mexico, who today, far away from the path of the tourist or the traveller, hold intricate ceremonies for the redemption and final cure of the child whose soul has been swallowed by the Great Dragon "Walula" who lives in the whirlpools of the rivers and who is very easily offended![1]

Among the Indians of New Mexico, the Great Dragon, who is called "Awanyu" lives in the waters of caverns—particularly underground rivers, and again is fond of snatching away children, while in the far-away Amazon, the Waikanos like to live near their guardian "Waku," the Great Dragon, who lives in the whirlpools of the river. He also has the bad habit of sometimes snatching away little children! Yet even in China where the Totem is beneficent, he is said to carry little children away to Heaven upon his back. What is this curious connection between the old symbol, water, and the ever-present danger to little children? Let us see if we can trace the American legends to a center, for only in this way can we tell from which direction the Dragon Totem invaded the Americas. And later, perhaps, we shall stumble upon the connection of the Totem with childhood.

NOW the oustanding symbols which flash to our mind are the great stone serpents with ruffs of quetzal[2] plumes which adorn so many of the ruins of Mexico. The Great-Plumed-Serpent of the Aztecs was Quetzalcoatl.[3] But according to the literature of the Aztecs in the "Song of Quetzalcoatl" recently translated from the ancient tongue into English by Cornyn,[4] the Plumed Serpent is really a Toltec deity. The Toltecs were under the influence of a saint-like bearded white man who strongly opposed human sacrifice. Among the Mayas, we see the influence of this same figure whose Christ-like religion was overcome by another bearded white man who re-instated human sacrifice. Is it possible to go behind the establishment of this humane religion in which only fruits and flowers were sacrificed? The very fact that they *were* sacri-

[1] *The Tarahumara by Bennett 1935.*

[2] *Quetzal—a sacred bird of Central Am. having long irridescent green feathers which were worn by royalty.*

[3] *Quetzalcoatl—Quetzalserpent. literal trans.*

[4] *Cornyn, John Hubert prof. of Aztec, Univ. of Mexico.*

ficed by the early Mayas suggests that the saint-like reformer substituted them for the earlier and bloodier sacrifices.

Again the Popul-Vuh, that strange legendary history which arose sphynx-like from the burning of the Mayan books because a literary Mayan had learned it by heart, comes as a ghostly guide-post to point the way. According to the Popul-Vuh, the earliest settlers who had followed the lead of Votan to the shores of Yucatan, and had built the magnificent, legendary city of Xibalba, belonged to the Totem of the Great Serpent, and their religion was a cruel one filled with the blood of human sacrifice. This religion was overcome by the invasion of Hurukane, the wind-god, who established a much more humane religion, and who was known as the "Heart of Heaven." Now this "Hurukane" has so many resemblances to Quetzalcoatl the pre-Aztec deity, that the conquerors of the long-established religion of Votan in Xibalba, seem to be the Toltecs of Mexico. Thus the Totem we are trying to trace seems to be *previous* to the Toltec Empire, which after reigning for untold centuries in the magnificent capitol of Tula[5] was finally overthrown by the invading Aztecs who re-established the custom of human sacrifice.

Knowing the propensity, therefore, for the conquering religion to take over the mantle and the customs of the previous religion, it seems most probable that the Toltecs gave their humane wind-god the mantle of the conquered Great Serpent, and since sacrifices had been expected by the population from aeons of bloody ritual, the empty altars were filled with fruits and flowers. Apparently then, Quetzalcoatl was not the true original Serpent-deity, but an invading god masquerading in the glittering scales of the dreaded Dragon. Thus religion seems to be pointing to a very early conquest or clash of two cultures, long before the coming of the Aztecs.

Attacking our problem from another angle, let us examine the languages of the peoples having the greatest amount of Serpent legend. To our surprise, we find that science is classifying the entire block of tongues from the Aztec to the Mayan under one vast inter-branching family known as the Uto-Aztecan. The family even extends to the Canadian border, as it takes in not only the Utes and Shoshones but the northern Bannocks. Even the Tanoan and the mysterious Keresian tongues are coming into the circle of suspected relationship. One wonders if language alone as an indication of racial origin, has ever faced such a complete breakdown, for it is perfectly obvious that the lean, long-faced and long-headed Tanoan, Keresian and Zapotec have little in common with the heavier-set, darker and round-headed Shoshonean. Yet intruded into the round-headed types of Northern Mexico again, is that finger of long-heads which extends into the inhospitable lands of Lower California—the wild Seri Tribe! And among the Seri looms the strong cult of the Great Dragon with the suspicion of bloody child-sacrifice!

If language has fallen down in this instance in proving a diversity of racial origin when both physical type and religion point to an ancient conquest, it certainly fulfills its mission as a time-indicator. If one tongue conquered another so completely that the conqueror became the universal language, or the two opposite tongues were blended, even as English arose from a clash of speeches, and that universal tongue in turn was diversified by time and distance into the present members of the Uto-Aztecan family, then we are indeed dealing with vast vistas of time. We are inclined to think of the great Aryan family of Europe as widely diversified in its branches which reach from the steppes of Russia to Spain, and from Norway to Armenia. However, these languages are apparently not as widely divided as the various members of the Uto-Aztecan tree. No wonder that Piny E. Goddard, writing for the American Anthropologist[6], finds that the main stocks of Indian tongues show a separation of one hundred thousand years!

IN DEALING with such vast vistas of time, during which cultural threads have crossed and re-crossed, it is obviously difficult to trace out a lost civilization, still there are strong clues. For example, both the Tanoan[7] and Keresian[8] peoples who show a Serpent or Dragon culture, even as the Zapotec[9], Zuni and Seri tribes, to mention only a few others, are long-headed peoples who have lived for centuries in isolation. They are obviously an old racial strain, for they are to be found islanded, as it were, in geographical fortifications, of either desert or mountain-range.

Of course, it is also true that the Shoshonean Hopis of Arizona show a similar Serpent culture and geographical isolation, yet according to their legends, they have come north within the last two thousand years as refugees who were driven from their cities by a conquering people. Possibly they were Toltec refugees fleeing from the Aztec advance. At any rate, their rituals have lost all racial characteristics and seem to be in the hands of secret societies, to which, theoretically, any man may join.

Now these long-headed peoples, who have

(Continued on page 207)

[5] *See "Song of Quetzalcoatl."*

[6] *American Anthropologist Vol. 29, No. 2. April, 1927.*

[7] *Tanoan—mainly Taos Pueblo New Mex. Keresian— 7 New Mex. Pueblos in Rio Grande Basin.*

[8] *Zapotec in mountains near Mitla Mex.*

[9] *Zuni in Navaho country.*

DISCUSSIONS

AMAZING STORIES will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brickbats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.

HIS BEST STORY

Sirs:

Yesterday I read what I consider the best story I have yet read. The story was "Mystery Moon," written by Edmond Hamilton in the Jan. Issue, 1941.

When will we have a return story about Eric Randall? Also, when will we have a story about Suicide Martin Brand?

E. HADEN GARRETT,
5302 N. 10th St.,
Arlington, Va.

A new Eric Randall story is up to Edmond Hamilton. If he will write it . . . we'll very probably buy it. As for Suicide Martin Brand, we've already mentioned a new one is on the way, and will reach you certainly before many months have passed.—ED.

WHERE IS McCAULEY?

Sirs:

I have been reading AMAZING STORIES and *Fantastic Adventures* for about two years so I think it is about time I put in my two cents' worth. I like most of the stories very much except for the Lefty Feep and the Don Hargreaves yarns. Personally I think they stink. The best story I have read in either mag was the two-part serial "Gods of the Jungle," by Nelson S. Bond in June-July, 1942.

The best department you have in AMAZING STORIES is the Scientific Mysteries. I get more enjoyment out of it than any of the rest. The best cover artist, I believe, is the guy that draws the Mac girls. By the way, what has become of him anyway?

HAROLD C. BULLARD,
Whitmore, S. C.

H. W McCauley called on us the other day and told us the good news that he was working on a new cover for us. You'll see it one of these months, we promise. ED

AMAZING STORIES' PREDICTIONS

Sirs:

The other day while wading through a pile of old magazines I came across something that astounded me. It was a weather-beaten copy of AMAZING STORIES featuring a novel by McGivern, entitled "Convoy to Atlantis." Having nothing special to do, I began reading the yarn. After a while the bored expression on my horrifying pan was replaced by one of awe and bewilderment. Get a load of some of the predictions made in that story: Axis forces would attack America late in 1941, the Allies would gain control of Africa, Russian armies would slowly drive back the Nazis, unconquered countries would begin to revolt, U.S. and British forces would invade Europe from the Mediterranean—all those things are stale news to us now. ***But the date of the issue was November 1941!*** Imagine it! AMAZING STORIES actually predicted this war and all about it a month before it began! Who said that science-fiction could never come true? By the way, McGivern makes several predictions for the future: Japan will give up before Germany, Hitler's armies will surrender and the war will come to an end with the assassination of Hitler by Goebbels!

If any reader has a copy of the story on hand, I urge him to haul it out and read it again. It'll scare heck out of ya!

Most incredible of all is the item in the editor's column announcing "Convoy to Atlantis." Quote: "If it comes true to any extent, don't say we didn't tell you. . . . We have a hunch that author McGivern and ourselves, via footnotes, have seen something of the future that we'd almost be willing to admit came to us via a time machine." Hmmmmmm! Would you be interested in selling that time machine, Mr. Editor?

Slightly less sensational is McGivern's "Mad Robot" tale in this issue. Good night! Why must we always get these gosh-awful surprise endings? I thought Ho Agar was the only likable character in the whole novelet. Of course, he turns out to be a vile villain in the end! I'm getting a little bored with all these courageous heroes—every one exactly like all the others. Are they poured out of the same mold? Why must each hero be either a drunkard or a saint?

The cover was pretty good except for one mistake. According to the author, each robot requires a section of brain tissue only a half inch square. The cover depicts a robot with a brain the size of a watermelon.

Best interior pic was Ronald Clyne's for "Master of the Living Dead."

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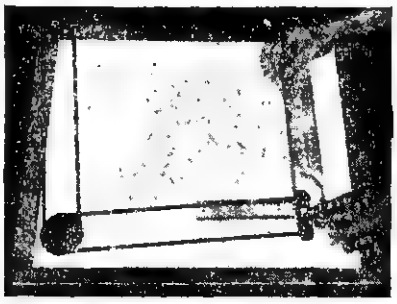

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At last! AMAZING has a letter department that *is* a letter department! Walter Terrill may have been 200% wrong, but we'll never be able to repay him for all the terrific argument he started. And this discussion of escape velocity is wonderful! I'd join it if I wasn't so ignorant. To heck with these characters who pick everything the editor says into tiny pieces. Never knew that trimmed edges cause a lack of paper. I see we're doing away with those little one-inch-long communiques that do no more than list the stories. Fine! A. S. is improving its Discussions column.

Why are you so opposed to reprints? The older S-F stories have a certain vastness -a sense of wonder at the unknown—the indefinable IT that the highly-polished newer yarns lack entirely. I am still waiting for Merritt's "Ship of Ishtar."

JOE KENNEDY,
84 Baker Ave.,
Dover, N. J.

Yes, the instances you have noted are just a very few of the things AMAZING STORIES *has prophesied with a more than "mathematically possible" accuracy. We believe this is one of the fascinations of science fiction. Glad to know you approve of Discussions in its new vigor. We are as amazed and delighted as you are. We are not opposed to reprints. Our principal objection is two-fold, first we want to be fair to today's writers who should have as much opportunity as past writers to do their bit and we feel that the reader cannot possibly be cheated if he is presented all new material; next, we find that a lot of the old stories suffer from comparison when lighted by the lamp of scrutiny rather than the flame of memory. We admit many are very good, we may someday (when the war is over) publish an Annual containing a selection of all-time* AMAZING *classics.*—ED.

FACTS WITHOUT FICTION

SIRS:

So Karl Bouvier, Jr., doesn't want science-fiction that contradicts facts? (See Discussions, AS, January, 1944.)

No space ships—because no one has yet succeeded in projecting an object beyond Earth's gravity. No robots—because science has not yet developed a mechanical equivalent of the human brain. Eliminate the death-rays and paralysis-pistols (which, I admit, might improve a good many tales). If that's the kind of story he wants, why doesn't he read something inspiring like "Bright Little Tales for Good Little Boys"?

The essence of science-fiction is IF. What would happen IF a being from space landed on earth? What IF a time-travel machine were developed before the war ends? A well-plotted and well-written tale along these lines gives the reader that shuddery feeling—"It COULD happen!"

Just because Karl has never *seen* or *heard* of one is no sign that a green-scaled, many-tentacled

Venusian can't materialize in front of him ten minutes from now.

Let's turn to a more cheerful topic—your January issue. It's the best since December, 1942, and "Warrior of the Dawn." For once ALL the yarns were swell not a single hack-piece to drag down the magazine! "Master of the Living Dead" was tops on my list, but I'm stuck with a five-way tie for second place!

Could you give me any information on where to obtain back issues of AMAZING—1942 and earlier? One of my greatest sorrows is that I didn't discover AS until a year ago. Think of what I missed!

ARTHUR H. RAPP,
2120 Bay Street,
Saginaw, Michigan.

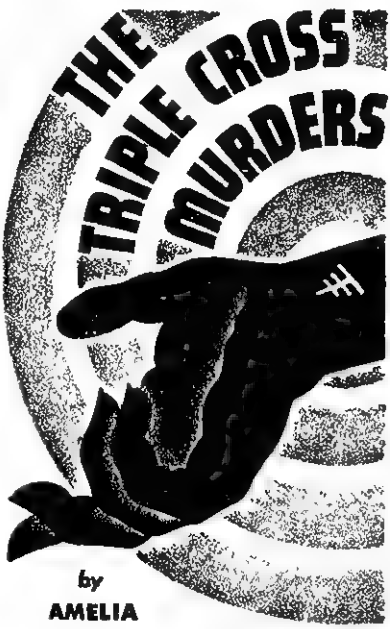
We don't think anybody will disagree with you about the "facts" in our fiction. Back copies of very many issues as far back as 1938 can be procured by ordering from our circulation department. Specify the copies you want, and you will be informed if they are available, and at what price.—ED.

SOME FASCINATING OPINIONS

Sirs:

Your January issue was excellent. I would especially like to see more of these fascinating Adam Link stories, as soon as fortune permits. Occasionally a letter from one of your readers amazes me in its short-sightedness. Space travel in a thousand years? It is my firm conviction that the next fifty years will see the space between planets at last being bridged. In fact, I will go so far as to say that this same length of time will see robots in common use! If any of my beloved fellow readers doubt the extent of veracity of these claims, I would like them to remember the vast strides science has made in the past decades. I certainly think you ought to start advancing science-fiction,—reality is catching up! Take those rocket planes, for instance, the Germans are now using. (Stolen from the really advanced science of the Reds, while still calling them "subhuman" and "inferior"—some laugh, eh?) So you see, we're already on the track.

But don't get me wrong—I don't want MORE space stories,—in fact, I could stand a little less. I was just correcting a flaw in a section of your readers' opinion. My own favorite S.F. theme, is a hero of our present age in a fantastic set-up. Down with that "Snodgrass and the Remarkable Monkeys of Pluto" type. Who the devil cares about the latest news from the Cat star or something of that sort. I'm getting pretty fed up with that type of stuff, and I think the rest of your readers feel the same way. (Or do they?—something to discuss.) While on the other hand, when one reads of an everyday young fellow involved (either humorously or dramatically) with a fantastic scientific gadget,—or in a fantastic situation, right here on good old twentieth century



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Earth, one's interest is instantly aroused. Why? Because the whole plot just MIGHT possibly happen,—and to you; and the plot stands out like murder in a tea garden. I don't believe any of my fellow readers would be so optimistic as to believe that he may some day be involved in intergalaxy clashes!

There also appears to be a foul conspiracy to keep away from war stories. (No doubt the sinister work of some foul smelling fish Venusian!) By Mars! I revolt against such a course! Say I: More war stories. After all, in real life we can only kill Hitler and Tojo once,—but in fiction, a ah! we can do it over and over again! An inspiration has just hit me, just this second! How's this, for one heck of an idea . . . Have one (or all!) of your top-flight authors write a super all-out war story, and at the climax, have the hero about to send one of the above vermin to you know where, BUT,—leave off there, without giving the delightful conclusion of how our hero went about disposing of the son of Heaven or Der Fuehrer. In order to have the author finish the climax, we readers will have to fill out a quota of War Bonds, bought directly from AMAZING STORIES! Knowing S.F. fans as I do (and I ought to,—I've been living with myself for 16 years), I am positive the response will be absolutely inter-spacial! Who wouldn't like to see that finish?

What is the cost and where can I get that pocket-book of classics you mention in your last issue?

SPENCER G BOYLE,
(No address).

Your letter is very interesting, and we think you are not too far off in your beliefs. Certainly your opinion of good science fiction is a very good analysis of the case. We'll think about your suggestions regarding a super war story. At least, we promise you there'll be many good war stories in our pages. "The Pocketbook of Science Fiction" might be obtained from some reader who sees this and has a copy for sale. We know no other way of getting it, since it was published some time ago and would no longer be on sale. —ED.

MORE ABOUT ATOMIC POWER

Sirs:

In this letter I am referring to the one of Keith Buchanan. In his letter he stated that only IF enough fuel could be carried by a rocket-ship it would be able to attain space. Well, this brings up the subject of atomics. An atomic fuel would be compact enough to store in a foot-square container, for the fuel would have the benefit of the smallness of the atom. In releasing the power of one atom a ship could be driven to the moon and further. With atomic fuel there would be no exhaust to have move backward. Also, he stated: "Someday if we get atomic-powered rockets we can forget all about escape velocity, but

it's going to take some doing before we get those super-fuels." All I have to say for that is: (1) We would not forget about escape velocity, because the power of the explosion, of the atom, might and might not give the needed power. This contradicts my other statements, but in a way they are right, the power of a single atom could take a ship to the moon, BUT a "toned-down" atom might not give the correct speed. The untouched atom would kill the humans in the ship because of the terrific jolt at the start of the explosion, thus a "toned-down" atom would be needed. (2) We could work on atomic fuels right after the war because of the rapid advances in atomics during the war. Possibly some people are working on it now.

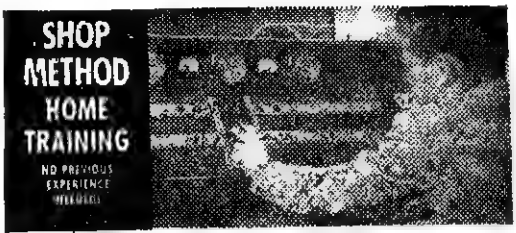
GEORGE R. LEWIS,
7910 Brutus St.,
Houston, Texas.

Personally we think you are making a few assumptions that are exactly that. First, that the power in one atom could take a ship to the moon. As a matter of fact, we don't know how much power an atom has. It has been estimated mathematically by scientists, who base their estimates on scientific laws; but no matter if that is their figure, extracting 100% of energy from any power-source fuel is expecting quite a bit, even from the atom. At present, ordinary gasoline gives up only a very small percentage of its potential combustively released energy. Next, why do you say we would have no exhaust with atomic fuel? Energy, to be effective, must expend itself against or in something. As a matter of fact, the presently proposed atomic energy (U-235) would not be the energy of the atom, but more likely of steam, generated from ordinary water released into the "cylinder" in which the U-235 acts as a catalyst (just as the spark plug fires gasoline vapor in the cylinder head of an automobile motor). But we do agree that some "toned-down" method (more likely because that will be the limit of our ability to efficiently remove the power of the atom) will hold true, and that human travel in space will still have to contend with the reaction to swift motion, swiftly applied.—ED

FIVE YEARS OF SATISFACTION

Sirs:

I have been reading AMAZING STORIES now for 5 years. All the issues have filled my imagination with delight. The "Adam Link" and "Lost World" stories were, in my estimation the pride and joy of your magazine. If you could print a full magazine dedicated to these two stories I think that they will go quickly. They were about the best stories that AMAZING ever had. I am practical in my thinking and views, but stories like these relax my mind and take me on trips to faraway places. This is the first time I have written to you. If this were printed I would feel mighty glad, but I guess you have more letters to handle which beat mine by a mile, so I don't mind, just as long as you know how I feel. I ex-



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pect to be in the army or navy soon and I will continue to be your most ardent fan. I just finished reading your January issue. It is pretty good. Wish there was more.

JERRY SCHREIBER,
(No address).

Thanks for your nice compliments. We hope you'll be with us five years from now!—ED.

A REPLY TO LANEFIELD

Sirs:

I have just finished your January issue. And I want to say right here that Mr. Ross Rocklynne is one of the best stf. authors I have ever come across. I have read his stuff in every magazine I could find, and can't heap enough praise on him. (By the way, what happened to L. Sprague DeCamp?)

As for the feature, "The Mad Robot," I didn't care for it much, nor the rest of the mag. Oh, for the good old days, when we used to have a nice, long, hazardous interstellar voyage, or a super ray drive, or a short jaunt through a fourth-dimensional space warp, and a space battle, with some of the details of astral-navigation.

What really started me off was not so pleasant as this bouquet throwing. It all started like this. In a good, clean, lighthearted frame of mind, I started to read the "Discussions," when I came to that utterly sickening, completely juvenile expression of opinion on page 196. I refer to that oh-so-condescending, polite note by "Sir Nelson Lanefield III." I am not usually one to start battles, but a *minus* epic such as his is too, too much. If the sight of a he-man in his bare chestedness disgusts and shocks Mr. Lanefield, III, so much, perhaps he had better go put on that pretty, new dinner-jacket, because I think I hear the butler calling "Dinnah is served." Come, come, Mr. Lanefield, if you must lower yourself so much as to read our "A. S.," you could at least come out of the clouds and realize that a man does not bother to change his clothes fourteen times a day when in the normal walks of life.

I dislike to clutter up the colums of "Discussions" with an epistle such as this, but, as I said, I have no recourse, since Mr. Lanefield neglected to give his address. (By the way, Mr. Lanefield, if you are under 16, allow me to apologize for my rudeness.)

That is all, gentlemen, I thank you for your kind attention, and challenge Mr. Lanefield to answer this soldier.

By the way, I hope you remember your little message about "inter-reader controversies" and publish this.

PVT. ROBERT S. SORENSON,
Military Secret,
U. S. A.

L. Sprague DeCamp, we believe, is in the services of his Uncle Sam.—ED.

CONGRATULATIONS TO REED

Sirs:

Just finished David V. Reed's "Empire of Jegga" and consider it to be one of the best pieces of work I've ever had the pleasure of reading in a science fiction magazine.

Congratulations on publishing it and give my congratulatons to author Reed.

WALTER O MILES,
530 West 6th St.,
Los Angeles, Calif.

Undoubtedly Mr. Reed will be delighted to know how much you liked his splendid novel. Watch for his next in the issue immediately following this one!—ED.

REJUVENATION!

Sirs:

Rejuvenated!

That's the word for the January AMAZING—a whale of an issue to get the publishing new year off to a bang-up start! I have my doubts about whether you can keep it up or not—as you mentioned in "The Observatory," most of the authors represented are not at present available for more material. But we long suffering readers can hope. And with St. John, Bloch and Irwin on call for next issue –who knows!

I only entreat Allah that Irwin does not descend to writing corn classics like Patton did with "War Worker 17." Both authors got a whale of a start —Patton with "The Test Tube Girl" and the super "Doorway to Hell;" Irwin with "The Vengeance of Martin Brand." Let's hope that Irwin keeps faith with his followers. Time will tell.

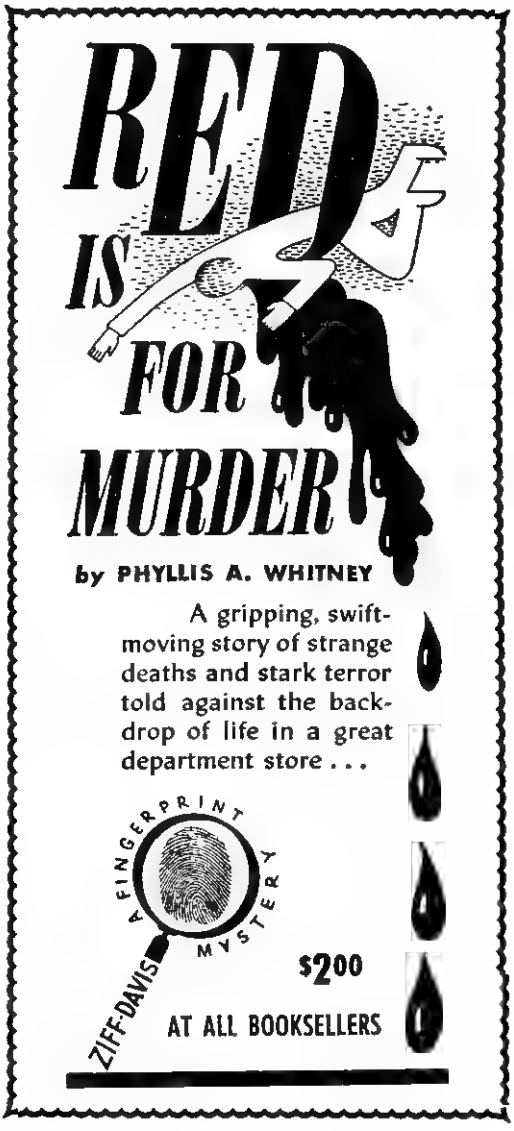
But enuf of this—yours truly now proceeds to the mildly sensational January AS. There were no "C" stories this trip; all stories are in either the "A" or high "B" bracket. Congratulations! And if you're interested, they come out this way:

A:

1. "Intruders from the Stars," by Ross Rocklynne. And here, like a bolt out of the blue, we have a minor classic, no less! Ross created some unforgettable characters and an unforgettable story in this yarn. And the love interest was adult and *real*—bravo! I was getting rather fond of Bess-Istra myself there at the end!

2. "The Mad Robot," by William P. McGivern. Some nice atmosphere in this one. I think this story is far closer to a scientific detective story than was "Carbon-Copy Killer," though Ho Agar, aside from being a Martian—the guy from Mars *always* is a dirty bum underneath it all - was rather transparent from the beginning. But 'twas a darned good tale anyhow—attractively illustrated on the cover by Mr. Bobby Fuqua.

3. "Phantom City of Luna," by P. F. Costello. Just barely slipped in under the wire in the "A" division. It was a bit too conventional in handling, but with a nice idea behind it. But no living soul can say that the tale wasn't *interesting*—



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and that in itself puts it a shade above the "B" department.

B:

4. "Island of Eternal Storm," by Berkeley Livingston. Just as the Costello yarn barely made the "A" division, this one just missed it. Nicely done.

5. "Master of the Living Dead," by Ed Earl Repp. Good in spots, mediocre in others. Ed can do better than this.

6. "The Needle Points to Death," by Gerald Vance. Not at all bad, and it missed the "C" department by a comfortable margin.

Thoughts of a Nonentity: The back cover is too violent for the purpose for which it is intended—you don't sell your magazines by means of the back; it's always on the stands right side up . . . and since when, dear editor, is the Moon a star? . . . try to keep the reader's pages about at their present size . . . L. Taylor Hansen's "Scientific Mysteries" is always excellent . . . what say we go out in space more often in AS?

CHAD OLIVER,
3956 Ledgewood,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

We didn't intend to infer that the Moon was a star. In that particular series, "Stories of the Stars," we may venture anywhere in the Universe for one of our paintings or stories. It was in that sense that we included a Moon story and painting. We certainly will go out into space again—very soon. Next issue, in fact. And Irwin's new story is a crackerjack space story.—ED.

A MATTER OF SIZE

Sirs:

It puzzles me indeed, what in the name of Einstein and relativity gives that eminent writer, Morris J. Steele, the mysterious reason to figure out that the Martians of mournful memory (of 3 million years ago) were ten feet high? That's, by the way, what he informs us in his awfully interesting and scientific essay about the "Warship of Mars" in your splendid July number.

We, the Earthians, are let's say—6 feet. As that neighbor of our planet, Mars, is about 2/3 the size of our own, would it not be reasonable to suppose that its inhabitants were proportionally smaller, instead of bigger, namely something like 4 feet pygmies? But, of course, I'm not posted on mathematic problems 25 million miles out in space.

E. L. MENGOHOEL,
1918 E. Franklin Ave.,
Minneapolis, Minn.

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that the giraffe is the form of life that inhabits Earth. Then would the Martian's size be okay? Life forms on all planets (where they exist) range from microscopic creatures to huge monsters, such as the dinosaurs. What has the mass of the planet got to do with it? We'd say Steele was absolutely right, to the fraction of an inch, when he says the Martian is ten feet tall. At least we

would have to say that if using your logic; because as a matter of fact, lesser gravity would reasonably tend to producing taller living creatures. –ED.

MORE REVERENCE

Sirs:

I have just finished reading the AMAZING for January and wish to compliment you on the story "Intruders from the Stars" Why can't we have more like this? I don't just mean on one angle, but with more God in them and less of this bunk, as in the "Mad Robot." (He lit a cigarette and handed one to her.) I don't buy your AMAZING STORIES or *Fantastic Adventures* to read about some one smoking cigarettes or drinking high balls and booze and why take up my reading time with this junk? I like good clean science fiction like "Intruders from the Stars." That was a masterpiece, and others could be the same. It is not at all necessary for the hero to be a drunkard and tobacco fiend or the heroine either. Give us some more stories giving praise to God and don't allow stories that take the name of the Lord in vain in your magazines. Rule them out or tell authors to rewrite them without this bunk. Just cut out three things in these books that is, no tobacco, no booze and no swearing and you will have 100% stories. We're in a jam at present. Maybe our own fault. The nation that forgets God goes down. How about Babylon and Rome and quite a few others? This is my U.S.A. and it is time all of us do a bit more serving the Lord instead of the devil.

Hoping to see these improvements in the next issue.

JOS. G. SERENE,
Route 1,
Apollo, Pa.

You're right. We could use a little more of the godly things these days. As for those cigarettes, we'll tend to our editing knitting a bit more closely, and cut them out! Yours is a constructive thought and we thank you for it.—ED.

A NICE LETTER TO GET

Sirs:

Congratulations on your January issue of A.S. I have read many different science-fiction mags, but this was the best one yet. Add my name to your already long (I suppose) list of admirers. I am somewhat of a scientist myself and I get a kick out of s-f stories, even though they are far-fetched.

Ross Rocklynne certainly has what it takes. "Phantom City of Luna" was also a top bracket story. All the other stories were interesting, but I don't think "Master of the Living Dead" goes too well in this kind of a book. Covers were especially good, too.

The only thing wrong with the mag was the

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CORRESPONDENCE CORNER

THIS feature will be discontinued for the duration in the interests of the safety of our armed forces and of national security.

fact that it came to and end (every word of it) too soon.

Yours for more long stories like "Intruders from the Stars."

J. ROBERT BRIDGE,
118 Irving Ave.,
Latrobe, Pa.

Thanks much, Mr. Bridge We'll have many more long stories like this. -ED.

SEVERAL POINTS ARE RAISED

Sirs:

Because I have finally finished both recent issues of your magazines, I decided to cease restraining the urge to sit down and relieve myself of several unwanted opinions First of all, the battle on "Carbon-Copy Killer." Maybe, as some character remarked, your magazine would go on the rocks if you failed to please two-thirds of the people, but losing one-third wouldn't do it any great amount of good either. Some people don't seem to realize that you've got to try to please everybody part of the time. I'm satisfied if I like 75% of the mag For instance, and this will probably invite a bomb in the mail, I distinctly enjoyed C-C K, but I must admit that I did not consider "The New Adam" to be the best story ever published It took me about two weeks to read each instalment, which is unusual to say the least, but I wouldn't object if another like it were published. I agree heartily with whoever it was that suggested a reprint of some of the older stories, because I am still in high-school, too, and haven't had a chance to read some of these classics.

How about a sequel to "Empire of Jegga," maybe not in the sense of the same characters and all, but more or less what happened when Earth took its place among the rest of the planets as far as travel and commerce and so on were concerned?

"Intruders from the Stars" struck me as the best this time with Costello's and Repp's yarns right behind. "Island of Eternal Storm" was a good story, but it seems as though it might better have gone in FA. For that matter, "Professor Cyclone" should definitely have gone in AS, and Arno's and Erwin's stories, and maybe even Yerxa's could have followed it.

I agree with the guy who said what he did about the ads and reader's pages I've often skipped the reader's pages because of the fine print, but mainly because I have to follow them through the digestive tract, then through old coins, wonders of the mind, how-to-be-a-detective-in-ten-easy-lessons, and end up with a guy with asthma throwing trick dice. It's too much. Anyway, even if I would like to buy his stuff, I get so mad at seeing it instead of the end of a cute remark, that I wouldn't have it given to me.

Oh, by the way, where did the fantasy come in, in "Pearl-Handled Poison?" Maybe I'm dumb.

On those covers. Why don't you stick the advertising away instead of putting it in the middle of the picture that we might keep. If we see the title we will investigate to see what's inside, anyway, and I for one can't tell whether a story is good because so and so wrote it, or because of the name

GUY TRUCANO,
Box 1094,
Dickinson, N. Dak.

We believe most of the readers will agree with your conclusions on variety. Perhaps Reed will write another Jegga story. That's up to him. But personally, we'd hate to have to try to equal the first story! AMAZING STORIES *runs fiction whose nature is implied in its title. Thus, we disagree with your thoughts on whether some of these stories belong in the magazine. All are certainly amazing. Isn't it better to run Discussions through the ad columns, rather than a story? We had been under the impression that our cover titles had been cut to an absolute minimum* —ED.

STORIES WORTH MENTIONING

Sirs:

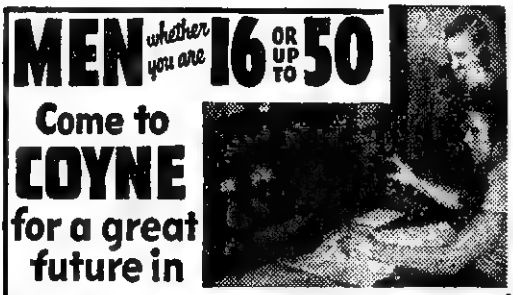
I have been reading AMAZING STORIES for about a year now and in my estimation it is the best science fiction magazine on the stands Once in a while other science fiction mags will run a good story, but I can always count on your mag to come through with the best there is.

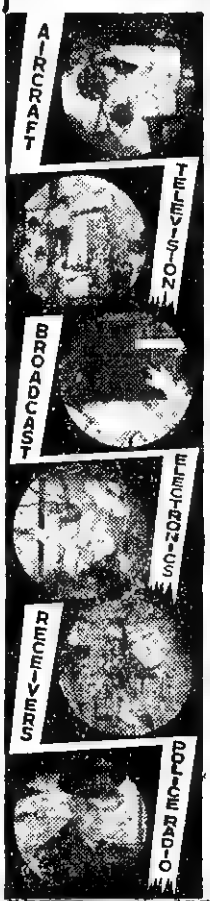
There are several stories worth mentioning that have appeared during the time I've been reading your magazine. "Warrior of the Dawn" by Howard Browne was a superb story. A very good plot. The only trouble was that there wasn't much science connected with it, if any. "The New Adam" by Stanley G. Weinbaum and "Empire of Jegga" by David V. Reed will go down in my memory as all-time greats. "Empire of Jegga" had a brilliant plot and superb art work. Let's have more stories by these same authors along the same lines; also more art work by Hadden.

Other stories which deserve mention are:

1. "Destroyer from the Past" by Polton Cross.
2. "The Avengers" by William P. McGivern.
3. "The World Beyond" by Ray Cummings.
4. "The Return of Hawk Carse" by Anthony Gilmore.
5. "The Vengeance of Martin Brand" by G. H. Irwin. Good story but lousy ending.
6. "Blitz Against Japan" by Robert Moore Williams.
7. "After An Age" by Eando Binder.
8. "Skeleton Men of Jupiter" by Edgar Rice Burroughs.
9. "That Worlds May Live" by Nelson S. Bond.
10. "Dr. Varsag's Second Experiment" by Craig Ellis.

Where oh where do you get such junk as "Phantom of the Film," "The Persian Carpet,"





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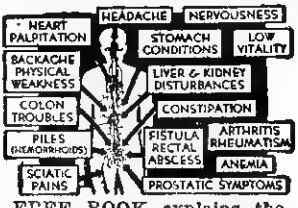

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"Bring Back My Body," "Never Trust A Demon," "Jenny, the Flying Ford," "The Don Hargreaves Series," and so on? If I was a swearin' man your ears would sure burn.

Your last issue was the best for some time. There weren't any outstanding stories but all the stories were good, especially "Intruders from the Stars" by Ross Rocklynne The front and back cover paintings by Fuqua were TERRIFIC. LOTS more work by him, PLEASE!

Thanks for enlarging the discussion section.

HARVEY A. DYER
13818 Davana Terrace
Van Nuys, Calif.

"Warrior Of The Dawn" was based on the science of Man, of the Cro-Magnon age, and was extremely accurate and entirely scientific. Don't be too disappointed by the ending of "Vengeance Of Martin Brand." Brand is by no means dead yet, and the second in this series (The Justice Of Martin Brand) will appear in these pages soon.—ED.

A BOOK OF CLASSICS?

Sirs:

I just finished reading Mr. Maddox's letter on Discussions. About the ads I agree with him 100%. Instead of dividing the page why not put a couple of full pages of ads in the back? If your objection is that if all the ads are together nobody will read them why not alternate a page of ads then some pages of Scientific Oddities or Scientific Mysteries?

I agree with you on the matter of prizes. If you really want to do something for your fans the thing to do is to have a hard covered book, with magazine paper with the shine, put out about every five years of all the stories raved about in the letters you receive. May I suggest for the first book "Empire of Jegga," "Intruders from the Stars" and "Test Tube Girl."

What ever happened to the fellow who wrote "Test Tube Girl"? He's as good as Burroughs in my estimation.

About the special book you could even include the best from *Fantastic Adventures.*

JOHN J. EDELL
199-07 100th Ave.
Hallis, L. I., N. Y.

Wouldn't your suggestion re the ads be about the same as at present, except that full pages of ads would enlarge the gaps? This way, Discussions runs concurrently, without a lot of "continued on page so-and-so." Your idea about a book containing our best stories is being filed in our minds for better times. Patton is still writing. We've run several of his stories since "Test Tube Girl." More are coming.—ED.

HE'S NO KISSING BUG

Sirs.

I have before me the January '44 issue of AMAZING STORIES, and would like to pass out some orchids and onions concerning said mag.

Firstly, give orchids to one of your best artists, Robert Fuqua, who drew the two great covers that decorated this issue.

The second bunch of orchids goes to the much improved Discussions. It was longer, therefore very good. I agree with Lee Wright, Chad Oliver, and the rest that weren't too fond of Mr. Terrill's letter.

I could go on handing out orchids on a lot of minor details, but I do not wish to take up too much space here, so I will go directly to the stories.

I use the reliable 1-10 method, but for all stories that rate below 1, I hand out nice, round, smelly, onions!

1. "The Mad Robots" (Nice going) 7.9.
2. "Intruders from the Stars" (Very good, well handled. Would be rated higher if it didn't resemble Weinbaum's works so closely) 9.0.
3. "Phantom City of Luna" (No comment) 6.2.
4. "Master of the Living Dead" (Not scientifically sound) 4.9.
5. "Island of Eternal Storm" (Neat) 6.6
6. "The Needle Points to Death" 8.0.

Oh, yes! Did you hear of the new love magazine called AMAZING STORIES? Don't worry, I'm not going mad, yet, but I think you will agree with me. Every story with the exception of the last ends in a love scene. Gads! Quote, from first story. "She raised herself on tip-toes, and kissed him gently on the lips." (My, how touching.) Quote, from second story: "Those two stood locked in embrace," etc. Quote from third story: "She found her lips occupied with other matters." Quote from fourth story. "We're going to take up from where we left off the other day." (Guess what they were doing the other day?) Quote from fifth: (This is stirring) "Then he kissed her." BOSH!

I think you would have greatly improved your last issue, if you would have separated the two main novels with two shorts.

AUSTIN JAY HAMEL
2090 East Tremont Ave.
New York 62, N. Y.

Your editor kinda likes the idea of kissing girls as lovely as the heroines of the stories. So he can't see why not have the hero kiss them? Is he a fish? Thanks for your ratings. We like to know things like that, although we don't clutter up Discussions with very many of them. Write us again.—ED.

DON'T MENTION OLD CLASSICS!

Sirs:

I suppose I should say the usual things like I have read your mag for the past 5 or 6 years, and that I like it a lot, but I'm not, for you already know that or I wouldn't take the trouble

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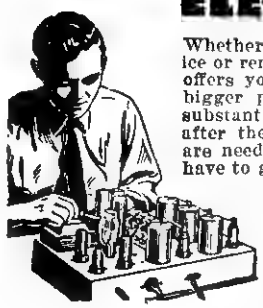

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to write you. But really I have read your mag ever since I can remember reading. I have always enjoyed science-fiction. And I don't care whether one story has a bit of a detective touch to it, a fantastic touch to it, or a plain old blood and thunder novel, I like 'em all. I'm not like those that write in and say they thought it was terrible because so-and-so was not just right to their tastes (Such as "Carbon-Copy Killer").

I do have a few mild brickbats to throw, though. One is the corny type of story in which the author has *one* thing of interest, such as a rattle-trap car, a lovable old man (preferably one whose name has the same initials such as "Horace Higginbottom," or "The Quandry of Quandras Quadaple" or something like that. Meanwhile the plot is exactly nothing.

I am in favor of trimmed edges, but if everyone is against them, I won't say anything on that subject.

Another brickbat. I don't like those guys what write in and say, quote, "Of all these, though, I liked 'The Black Flame' or some other classic of an age in which I just didn't happen to be born in time to read. It makes my mouth water and my mind hurt to think of missing all those good stories. The farthest back novel that I can remember is something like "After the Deluge."

I like all Burroughs stories, and may he write many more after this war. And I did, did, did like Browne's "Warrior of the Dawn." A big sequel, please, Mr. Browne! Another bright spot in your magazine was "Bill Cauldron Goes to the Future."

In your January issue which I am just reading, your stories were o. k. Fuqua's all right on gadgets but not so hot on humans. I like "Intruders from the Stars," best. Keep up your good work.

ROBERT PROCTOR
Route No. 6
Clarksville, Texas

If you remember "After The Deluge," you haven't missed a great many stories! Browne is at work on the second of his caveman novels.

—ED.

REPRINTS IN PAMPHLET FORM?

Sirs:

I'm afraid I'm not very good when it comes to writing letters and even worse when I'm trying to make a suggestion

Every once in a while my scoffing friends invade my living room to see me painstakingly copying down word for word the stories in AMAZING STORIES and *Fantastic Adventures* which I consider classics. These typewritten sheets are carefully stapled and kept within easy reach. As I have no room in my small apartment to store my magazines, I simply keep those stories I like best, and give the magazine away.

When paper shortages are a thing of the past, why don't you publish, of your own accord, the most wanted stories in small pamphlets or pocket-

books? I know that some of your stories have been printed in book form, but it has been impossible to acquire a single one. You could make a fortune by offering your readers these pamphlets directly through you. They could be about five or six inches square, stapled twice down the middle page, and the outside cover could be of heavier paper—a comparatively inexpensive procedure. The request of your readers would determine the stories and number of issues.

First on my prefered list include, "The Ice Queen," "After An Age," "The New Adam," "Tiger Girl," "That World's May Live," "Warrior of the Dawn," and from *Fantastic Adventures* "Witch of Blackfen Moor."

Why don't you see what your readers have to say for or against this post-war suggestion?

MRS. A. BURCH
Tarrytown, N. Y.

Strangely enough, your editors have been thinking of just such a procedure, except possibly just a bit more ambitious (in the pocket-book form). Perhaps after the war we will do many thing along these lines.—ED.

PERSISTENCE DESERVES PUBLICATION!

Sirs:

It's so nice these war torn days to escape via magazines to a nice quiet death ray battle on Mars or go with Lena Wartelsniffer while she tracks down a helpless male jumping from ring to ring of Saturn.

Good old "Discussions" still goes on with bricks from you and bouquets from me. Wouldn't it be fun if the readers sent the readers bouquets or bricks for their letters while they are sending same for our dear editor—long suffering mortal!

You're wondering maybe whether I liked your stories! Don't I always! Well not *always*.

"Intruders From the Stars" by Ross Rocklynne was super. Don't you just love those raven-haired sleeping beauties?

"The Mad Robot" by William P. McGivern was quite interesting. But I didn't think part of a living brain could be used in robots. Can't huh?

Hope this letter gets printed for once. My other two or three must have met a fate worse than death, 'cause I did put black lines on paper and sent 'em in. Yep, I used all my skill on a mere letter and no one ever printed them.

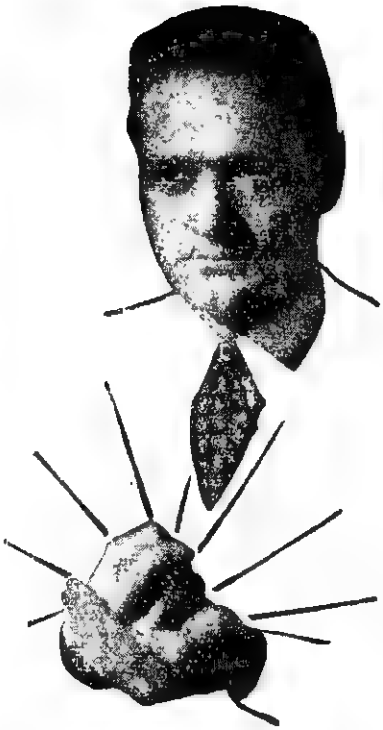
S. Shaver's letter on the Ancient Language was extremely interesting to me. I'm afraid I'm not quite clear on the whole matter, but I certainly would like to be.

The "O" for orifice, even is shaped like an open mouth isn't it? If you had wanted to write, "you talk!" Would you put the symbols, U O?

What happened to Esperanto?

Will be glad to answer any letters that should wander my way.

If anyone has any old mags for sale kindly let



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me know. The older they are the better. I don't mean torn-to-bit-ones mind you, just old dated ones. Till next time.

VIDA CLAIRE SCHNEIDER
77 Chester Place
Yonkers, N. Y

We certainly don't mean to ignore you, or any reader who writes, Vida, but we get an awful lot of letters we don't print. We haven't the space—and it would amount to the whole magazine! But you deserve a break, so here you are—and keep on writing! Shaver has written us again, enlarging on his language, and we'll give you more details next issue. He has stirred up a lot of interest, and perhaps something will come of it all. Esperanto is still going strong, but the war has just robbed it of publicity. However, after the war, we believe languages understood all over the world will be a vital subject for thought. ED

LIKES THE LONG ONES

Sirs:

Although I have been a reader of your mag for some time this is the first time I have ever written in to any mag Your mag is tops in the science-fiction field. Discussions and the other departments are great. How about more serials, fewer short stories, and more novels? Stories like "The New Adam," "The Hollow Planet," "Earth Stealers," although not common, make your magazine much more interesting.

M. D. THATCHER
27 Sherman Ave.
East Newark, N. J

We have plenty of novels and serials on hand, but serials will have to wait until we resume monthly publication.—ED.

A BRAND NEW READER

Sirs:

I have just read my first copy AMAZING STORIES, and (if it will make you feel better) you can add my name to the long (presumably) list of fans. I am taking science in school, and I'm not interested very much in it. But I wouldn't mind if textbooks were written like *Fantastic* and AMAZING magazines.

The book I just read was January 1944 issue "The Mad Robot" and "Phantom City of Luna" were tops!

T for terrific
O for oh! so good
P for perfect
S for superb

Main Criticism! "Master of the Living Dead" was dead material. A mad scientist with a big idiot for an assistant, kidnaps a pretty girl, hero intervenes just in time, saves her, scientist attempts to kill assistant, who comes back and lives thru numerous wounds, kills said scientist, and falls dead. That's the plot of nearly every mad scientist movie.

In an answer to a letter, you said there were no good solutions to "The Perfect Trap." Why not have another one? And maybe a couple of whodunits? I think the book would be improved if a few comic stories were inserted. "Intruders from the Stars" could stand a sequel. How about it?

G DALLAS
Cleveland, Ohio

We wouldn't be surprised if you got everything you asked for, eventually!—ED

NUTS TO THE CRITICS!

Sirs:

What a mess! what a mess!! Now don't get me wrong, I don't mean your mags. A.S and F.A. I mean those people (?) who write and advise YOU to improve your mags and to shoot one author and to strangle another. Personally I can't find any improvement necessary. What do they expect you to do? I suppose make the mags specifically for them and let the rest of us go to Hades, or something stronger? True I've seen some stories that didn't come up to par in my estimation, but I'm not complaining, look at all the good stories you've given us. There is an example of what I mean. Maybe the stories I thought weren't up to par were to someone else the best stories. Ohhhh wellllll!!!

Now about trimmed edges I suppose they are O. K. but what's the use? Who cares about them? Does it improve the enjoyment and stories any? Next someone will want golden bookends with the mags, and then they will have something else to gripe about, the extra cost. Well I suppose they have the right to gripe and complain, for this the good old U. S. A.

Now, here is what I think of your mags. since I have that off my chest. There is only one thing wrong with them, once I get started I got to use a lot of willpower to stop reading. In my estimation they are superb!!! Terrific!!! Well they're swell anyway. I haven't missed an issue since Vol. 17 No. 3 (March 1943) of AMAZING STORIES and Vol. 5 No. 3 (March 1943) of *Fantastic Adventures*.

Your staff of authors and artists has my compliments for a superb job. Keep 'em good!!! Keep 'em coming.

ALVIN M. C. SWEETMAN, Age 16
R. F. D. No. 3
Midland, Michigan

Tsk, tsk. Such enthusiasm—ED.

HE STANDS ALONE

Sirs:

Upon removing the envelope from this letter you will find a neatly wrapped and prepared brickbat; the first one off the assembly-line. Frankly, I have been reading AMAZING STORIES and *Fantastic Adventures* since the year one, and this is the first edition that I have come across which doesn't come up to par. First of all; one realizes that poor material published is not the fault of the editor We all realize that most

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of your best men have gone to war. But my chief gripe is that one of the usually fine authors has gone on the rocks "Intruders from the Stars" by Ross Rocklynne is not so good. Rather crudely written, unconvincing, and reads as if it was shortened from a much longer draft.

Next on the list: "Master of the Living Dead," by Ed Earl Repp. This would have been all right, but somehow the story leaves a bad taste in the mouth; there's something a little disgusting about the plot.

"The Mad Robot" by William P. McGivern is about the best in the January issue. This author is always good, this story was pleasant and interesting. But one thing: It was kinda obvious that Ho Agar would turn out to be responsible for the trouble.

"Island of Eternal Storm" by Berkeley Livingston. Nice plot, no crude description, well written; that idea of life and death reversed is something to think about.

"Phantom City of Luna" by Costello. I think everyone likes time travel stories.

"The Needle Points To Death" by Gerald Vance. The plot was so-so, but amazingly well written, and showed great promise.

In spite of the knocks dealt out the magazine is still a buy for a quarter. The covers are years ahead of any other publication, fine drawing and colors. What about getting some of Hans Bok's art? He's good.

PHILIP K. DICK
1411 Arch St.
Berkeley, Calif.

You are actually the only reader who did not rave about Rocklynne's yarn. More of Williams is coming up. New artists, if good, are always welcome.—ED.

A RAVE FOR REED

Sirs:

I purchased the November issue of AMAZING STORIES at 7:00 last evening, and at 2:00 in the morning I had read every word of fiction it contained. Usually it takes me from two days to a week to finish a magazine. In a magazine such as AMAZING, publishing a long novel and some shorts and novelettes, I generally read most of the shorter yarns in one day and spend the next two or three days reading the novel. But not this time! After finishing the shorter tales, I started in on the book-length, intending to read a few pages and then lay the book down and go to bed. But once I got started on that story I couldn't stop; I read it right through at one sitting. And for a 90,000 word story that's something! "Empire of Jegga" was all I had hoped it might be. Reed is a worthy rival of Don Wilcox. Let's have a lot more "Super Novels" from his enchanted pen!

WILLIAM J. JAMES
10026 Aurora Ave.
Detroit, Mich.

There seems to have been no doubt in the readers' minds that Reed has written a classic. We were proud to publish the story.—ED.

SCIENTIFIC MYSTERIES

(Continued from page 188)

taken up their life in refuge-locations, and who show strong Dragon culture, also have two other traits in common, both of which have significance. All of them display an ancient child sacrificing ritual to a Veiled god who controlled the breath passages of the body. In all these cases, breath is thought of as the soul, and some cloth or instrument was anciently worn to protect it. Thus the curious nose-guard[10] ceremonial decorations or masks used in these ritualistic dances to the Veiled-One. And secondly, all of these peoples have a strange legend about a race of warrior-women who were "Wives of the Serpent" or they have a legend about the revolt of their women who became enamored of a water-serpent, but who finally returned to them. These legends of the women extend all the way into South America, but they are apparently centered in the Antilles. It was the strength of the story that women warriors with metal heads and metal swords once invaded South America from the Atlantic, that caused the exploring Spanish to name the main river of Brazil, The Amazon. Is it possible that the women whom legend says that the Lybian monarch Herakles defeated in battle—the Amazons, did actually cross the Atlantic, and with their metal helmets and bronze swords, carve out a new empire for themselves in the jungles of the Matto Grosso?

As for the Veiled One, who is always connected with some form of child-sacrifice, (or the relic of some ritual which was once obviously such a sacrifice), is this god to be identified with the wind god of the Toltecs—the humane Quetzalcoatl, even though his face was sometimes supposed to have been veiled? Positively not. All Aztec literature states conclusively that Quetzalcoatl was opposed to *any* type of human sacrifice True, he held baptismal ceremonies for children, but again we read into this the reaction to the ceremonies of the preceding religion. Thus again, we must suppose that even his designation as the wind-god, was the stolen mantle of a former and more terrible deity

However, these two cultural clues have given us something which our study of the Uto-Aztecan family of languages failed to disclose. We can trace these cultural clues to a center, from which untold milleniums ago, they were dispersed to the peoples who are now isolated island fashion upon mountain ranges and inhospitable deserts. This center is not the Alaskan coast, as one might be led to suspect by the power of the Totem in Asia, but it is the Caribbean Sea and the volcanic Antilles which curve out into that

(Concluded on page 209)

[10] *Apache Devil-Dance, Keresian ritual to the Veiled One, nose-sticks worn by Itzaes on Ancient Mayan temple-paintings, etc*

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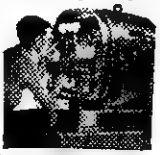

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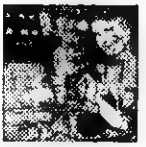

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SHIP OF CALLISTO

By MORRIS J. STEELE

Our back cover carries James B. Settles' exotic concept of the oar-propelled galley of this satellite of the planet Jupiter

CALLISTO is the fourth of the satellites of Jupiter discovered by Galileo, and is the most distant from its parent body of the four. It has been estimated by astronomers that it is only 0.6 as dense as water (Earth is 5 51 as dense as water). Therefore, we are confronted with a world which is certainly nothing like ours. Certainly it has no metal core, nor any heavy rock formations. Rather it would be a world of very light metals and rock and its oceans would be very small.

Callisto is slightly larger than the planet Mercury, and although it does not now possess an atmosphere, it seems logical that in its youth it had one perfectly capable of supporting life. It is concerning this period in its history that this concept of the possible sea-going means of locomotion by artist Settles has dealt.

The satellite is 1,168,700 miles from the center of Jupiter. Its period of revolution is 16 days, 16 hours, 32.2 seconds. Its diameter is 3,220 miles. The Danish astronomer, O. Rõmer used it, along with its three companions, to determine the speed of light.

Markings can be seen on the surface of Callisto which indicate that it is not gaseous, but possesses land areas, and possible mountainous regions, in addition to seas.

Artist Settles has pictured one of these seas as a limpid ocean of unearthly-looking water, contained in a basin surrounded by high cliffs of bauxite ore (aluminum). Much of the color of the water is probably caused by this ore, which has a distinct blue color.

Because of the density (or lack of density) of the atmosphere, there is little if any wind, and the sea is perpetually unruffled; even oily in appearance, although this is not the case. The water is ordinary H_2O.

Since the satellite has no winds, its peoples would be forced by that circumstance (coupled with the fact that they would have little opportunity to develop the science of mechanics to the point of combustion engines) to invent a type of ship propelled by something as primitive as oars.

However, let us picture the ship itself before we undertake to describe its propelling power. Here we have a very shallow draft ship shaped much like the ancient galley of Roman times on Earth. However, a portion of it is enclosed, largely the stern, giving it a startling similarity to the ships of the type Columbus used to cross the Atlantic.

Forward a lookout (or bridge) would be constructed for observation, surmounted by a mast used only to carry a pennant or identification banner.

The keel and ribs of the ship would be fashioned of the very rare wood found on the planet (since trees grow only in very limited areas on this world of little density). Over this framework would be fastened large planks of a very light, thick, and tough bark (like cork) which would be obtained from underwater "trees" related to the giant seaweed family.

This cork-wood construction would make the ship extremely light and buoyant, and would lend itself extremely well to the propulsion of the ship by oars. No great banks of oars would be needed, as in the galley of Earth, but perhaps only two large sweeps on each side of the ship.

These sweeps would be attached by crossbars to several vertical timbers which could be lifted after a sweep forward, thus allowing the paddles of the oar to swing forward by gravity and dip again into the water in advance of their former position. The timbers would descend once more, and be pressed forward, causing the paddles to sweep backward once more.

The motive power would be manual, provided by slaves who would pull on ropes in turn; first for the lifting of the oars, then for the thrust when dipped into the water. These slaves would be below decks.

Beyond the shallow-draft keel, these ships would be rudderless, and steered entirely by the oars, which could be "feathered" on either side to either cut the water or bite into it.

Living quarters would be aft, and would house approximately fifty passengers. A crew of fifty would make the capacity of the whole ship about one hundred persons.

The crew would remain below, and the officers of the ship would inhabit the "bridge."

The ship would be approximately one hundred and twenty feet long, and its beam would be about forty-two feet. Its overall height would be fifty-eight feet.

It would have a speed of approximately twelve miles per hour, and would skim over the waves with quite an amazing agility.

The pennant of identification would reveal its port of embarkation, its destination, and other information easily read from a distance on the length of the pennant, which would be as much as forty feet. This pennant would stream out aloft as the ship moved forward at its twelve-mile speed.

SCIENTIFIC MYSTERIES
(Concluded from page 207)

ocean like the sunken mountain chain of a long-lost land!

If this is the point then, from which the ancient colossus of the seas, the dreaded Great Dragon, entered to stamp itself upon the legends and the rituals of the Americas, there must be other clues—legends and names which may help us to reconstruct the history of that world-power which cast its reptilian shadow across the entire earth prior to what we now call history.

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SHIP OF CALLISTO The "barkentine" of Callisto was truly made of bark. It was made of the very thick birch-like bark of great trees that grew under water. It was propelled by manual power alone. (See page 208)